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It's said that there used to be 365 of them. Now there are only a dozen, and the authorities seem to be intent on finishing them off. Pascal Meunier captures a disappearing world

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Mandela is not alone: more and more of us are living to 90. Maureen Cleave visits four people who are still living a full life in their tenth decade

COVER PHOTOGRAPH **STEVE DOUBLE**

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HOW OLD IS old, these days? Not long ago I put the question to a woman of 93. "Old", she said firmly, "is ten years older than you." More and more people are living into their 90s, and on page 102 we talk to four of them. The intention is not to compile a comprehensive picture of old age—that would have meant one of the four having Alzheimer's—but to capture its changing face.

Old age is changing faster than our attitudes to it. If your own pension is still some way off, prepare to adjust your preconceptions now. You could find yourself turning 70 with a parent or two still alive. You may be retired for 30 years—or outlive the idea of retirement. Our four interviewees have all stayed active. Three of them write books, one plays tennis, one married in his 80s, and another has 73 descendants. They all have illuminating things to say to our reporter, Maureen Cleave, who is a pensioner herself. I wrote to one of the four, Leo Abse, saying that we were sending a writer in her 70s to see him. He wrote back: "I look forward to meeting the young lady."

Age runs through this issue like a refrain. We celebrate a 90-year-old statesman, an 80-year-old painter and a 73-year-old singer. We also touch on a less happy facet of old age, when a group of big names keep dominating their field well into their dotage. The broadcaster Jonathan Meades feels this has happened in architecture, which he labels a male gerontocracy. On page 62 he profiles the exception to the rule: Zaha Hadid, who is neither male nor old, just excellent.

Eagle-eyed readers may have spotted a new name on this page. Edward Carr has stepped down as our editor, or rather up, to become editorial director. He had been combining the job with being the business affairs editor of *The Economist*, and the business world kept butting in, going wrong, and poaching him back from us, so he decided to vacate this chair. He had mixed feelings about it and so did I, after being his deputy for a year. We were thrown together on a journalistic blind date and clicked immediately. Ed is a rare blend of professional rigour and personal charm, and he has done great things at *Intelligent Life*, creating a magazine that is bold and distinctive, that talented people want to work for, and that a growing list of subscribers want to read. When people ask what I hope to do with the magazine, there's a simple answer: carry on Ed's good work.

That doesn't mean standing still. It's said that people who own a holiday home end up spending their holiday maintaining their home. Quarterly publishing is a bit like that: changes that might be made over three or four editions of a monthly all happen at once. *Intelligent Life* has evolved with each issue. This time, we are putting more food on your plate, with a memoir from an ice-cream maker's daughter and a report on how restaurants are finally becoming quieter, as well as our Wine-List Inspector's verdict on the foodie paradise of the Fat Duck. He took me with him, and I can tell you that he's dead right about it being stimulating—and about the chocolate wine.

We have a new contributing editor, Julie Kavanagh, biographer of Nureyev and former London editor of the *New Yorker*. She reports from Spain on the birth of Angel Corella's new ballet company. We have signed a sports columnist, Ed Smith, the England cricketer and author whose pen is as elegant as his bat; he will be analysing a great sportsman in each issue. We expand our coverage of the booming world of video games as Tom Standage begins a regular column, and we now have a letters page, so let us know your views. And do visit our website, moreintelligentlife.com, where fresh material appears alongside articles from the magazine. Two of our five most read pieces this spring were about Herodotus. *Intelligent Life* indeed. TIM DE LISLE

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The Economist

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE ECONOMIST
John Micklethwait

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBBIE BRAGG

ANNALISA BARBIERI – ice cream, page 26 – is a former seamstress, fashion editor and fishing writer who has columns in the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*.

MARCUS BERKMANN – boring, page 80 – is pop critic of the *Spectator* and author of "Rain Men", "Zimmer Men" and "Fatherhood".

SABINE DURRANT – boring, page 78 – is a novelist and *Guardian* feature writer.

JILLIAN EDELSTEIN – 90-somethings, page 102 – is an award-winning photographer whose work has appeared in the *New Yorker* and *Vogue*.

ARTHUR ELGORT – rites of summer, page 44 – is a photographer whose work has appeared in *Vanity Fair*, Italian *Vogue*, and at the V&A.

ANTHONY GARDNER – books, page 22 – edits the Royal Society of Literature's journal *RSL*.

ANTHONY GOTTLIEB – thinking, page 24 – is a former executive editor of *The Economist*. He is working on a book about nothingness.

PHILIP HENSHER – visual CV, page 114 – is art critic of the *Mail on Sunday*, a columnist for the *Independent*, and author of a new novel, "The Northern Clemency".

DAVID JENKINS – restaurant noise, page 30 – is consultant editor of the *First Post*, an online magazine. He also writes for the *Sunday Telegraph*, *Vogue* and the *Guardian*.

ALAN JUDD – espionage, page 41 – is a novelist, biographer and former soldier.

J.M. LEDGARD – the deep, page 72 – is *The Economist*'s Nairobi correspondent and author of "Giraffe". His next novel is about the ocean.

GABRIELE MARCOTTI – Euro 2008, page 18 – covers European football for the *Times*. His biography of Fabio Capello is published in August.

JONATHAN MEADES – Zaha Hadid interview, page 62 – writes and broadcasts on culture, architecture and food. His programme "Magnetic North" has just ended on BBC2.

PASCAL MEUNIER – photo essay, page 84 – is a documentary photographer whose work has appeared in *Le Monde 2*, *Geo* and *El Pais*.

JAMES MILES – Being There, page 130 – is *The Economist*'s Beijing correspondent.

ANDREW MIKOLAJSKI – One Perfect, page 61 – has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Climbing Roses".

ADAM ROBERTS – Mandela, page 96 – is news editor of Economist.com, and a former Johannesburg correspondent of *The Economist*.

CATHERINE ST GERMANS – fashion, page 44 – is the founder of the Port Eliot Lit Fest and a former style editor of the *Telegraph Magazine*.

TOM SHONE – bestsellers, page 116 – is the author of "Blockbuster". His first novel will be published next year by Hutchinson.

ED SMITH – sport, page 42 – is captain of Middlesex County Cricket Club. He has played baseball and has written three books, including "What Sport Tells Us About Life".

WILL SMITH – The Mission, page 138 – is a comedian and actor.

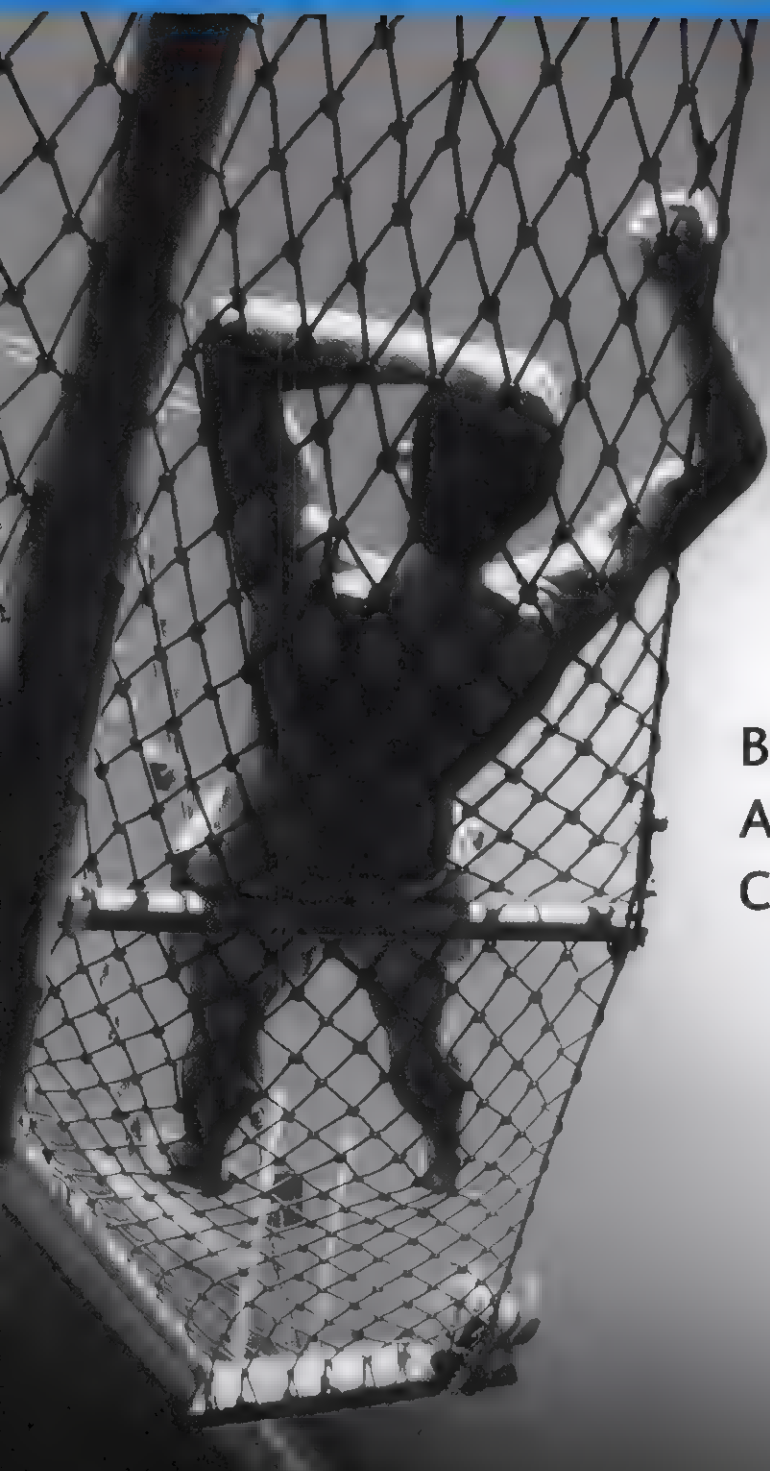
TOM STANDAGE – video games, page 43 – is business editor of *The Economist*.

PHILIP WATSON – a Cretan wedding, page 122 – is an editor at Thames & Hudson.

JUDITH WATT – bad taste, page 54 – lectures on fashion at Central St Martin's.

ADRIAN WOOLDRIDGE – bores, page 83 – is Washington bureau chief of *The Economist*.

New look: the lobby at The Economist Building when the clothes and shoes for our fashion shoot (page 44) dropped in on their way to Somerset



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ONLINERS SNIPPETS FROM COMMENTS ON OUR WEBSITE

Andrew Miller's piece "The End Of The World As We Know It" (spring issue) drew a heated response on moreintelligentlife.com. Ramesh Raghuvanshi wrote that while Western culture is "based on fear", Indians tend to believe God will prevent a catastrophe: "We never think of doomsday." But "Cakeface" retorted: "Eschatology is a cultural universal." Echoing Miller's entertaining anxiety, Mark Borgha wrote: "I have bought a small farmhouse high in the Carpathians, I have stocked up with guns and stockpiled food, ammunition, 5,000 gallons of fuel oil and an armour-plated Monster Truck—so flesh-eating zombies? Bring 'em on!"

A flurry of comments, many with exclamation marks, greeted our guide to the best critics (spring). Many readers named their own favourites, with film critics arousing the fiercest passions. Suggestions included Nigel Andrews (*Financial Times*), Armand White (*New York Press*), the Filthy Critic (www.bigempire.com/filthy), Joe Morgenstern (*Wall Street Journal*), and David Thomson (*Film Comment*, the *Guardian*—and author of our piece on Martin Sheen, spring issue). In books, one reader protested at our "egregious omission of Updike"; in music, Matthew Perpetua (Fluxblog.org) was cited as the "finest pop music critic working today".

Over on Gawker.com, a poll was held on our film and books choices (gawker.com/367571/are-these-your-favorite-critics). Film produced another landslide for Anthony Lane of the *New Yorker*, who polled 63% of the vote, ahead of David Edelstein of *New York* magazine (24%). Books was much closer, with Michiko Kakutani of the *New York Times* (26.3%) pipping James Wood of the *New Yorker* (25%). Gawker even ran a picture of each critic, prompting one commenter to observe: "I don't have a particularly high forehead. Does this mean I have pretty much no chance at ever becoming a professional critic?" ~ EMILY BOBROW

Peak oil freak-outs

Re: TEOTWAWKI by Andrew Miller (Features, spring issue)

I live in Canada, I too am expecting my first child, I read "The Road" (and nobody should read that book if their wife is past the first trimester). I can't imagine a full pop-cultural review of apocalypse. That takes guts. But the non-fiction version of it, bubbling up around the internet, the Neo-Malthusian Peak-Oil scenario is what keeps me up at night.

Global warming will likely be a slow curve, and terrorism necessarily exists on the fringes. But scarcity makes humans go a bit nuts. And as soon as everyone gets the message (either real or imagined) things get a bit messy. My only response to becoming a father is to invest in solar power. I never cared about it before, and don't have much love for crackpots of any sort. Maybe the one lesson from the 1980s that I should have paid more attention to was "Mad Max".

CHRIS BAPTISTA, TORONTO

An expat on the back

Re: Being There—Washington, DC by Rebecca Nicolson (Places, winter issue)

Beautiful, witty writing. It all rang true—and I've done time in both countries. A friend steered me to the article because I'm an American living in the English countryside—and she thought there were some parallels in our experiences. (So guess where I have to go for big shops? Reading.) But we both thought it was odd to think of living in DC as representative of the American experience—I think that most Americans would probably see DC as an anomaly. Still, your article has hooked me as a reader of this magazine.

BETH BONINI, BERKSHIRE

Where were the blog critics?

Re: Reviewers reviewed (Culture, spring issue)

It's frustrating to see the continued hegemony of critics from the print world (online versions of print publications are just a new package for the same group of elites), when there are hundreds of excellent film critics in the blogosphere. Dennis Cozzalio at *Sergio Leone and the Infield Fly Rule* (sergioleoneifr.blogspot.com) is simply great no matter what he writes about. Michael Guillen at *The Evening Class* (theeveningclass.blogspot.com) has a ton of insights and great taste.

MARILYN FERDINAND, SKOKIE, ILLINOIS
WWW.FERDYONFILMS.COM

The same tune

Re: the Playlist (Culture, winter issue)

Thank you for your playlist. I was most intrigued by the fact that I happened to know (and really like) seven out of the 12 songs. I concluded that the other five were probably worthwhile downloading—and I have not been disappointed.

ERIC LOONTJENS, NETHERLANDS

Très beau

Re: spring issue

I am an ageing ex-journalist who has seen many, many magazines—both here in France and in my native America. I'm writing to say that *Intelligent Life* is the most beautifully designed magazine I have ever seen. After I stop looking at it, I'll read it.

JOSEPH S. NATHANSON, BEAUMES-DE-VENISE

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VIKTOR & ROLF
HIT THE BARBICAN

London's Barbican Centre may be a cultural power-house, but it's hardly renowned for its fashion sense—certainly not in comparison with, say, the V&A. With its first exhibition devoted to a single label, however, the Barbican's art gallery could not have displayed better taste. For 16 years, the cerebral Dutch designers Viktor & Rolf have been creating clothes (*right*) that walk the line between art and fashion—frustrating fashion editors and delighting the art world in equal measure—and have had pieces included in group exhibitions in America, Tokyo and Paris. The pair continually challenge what fashion is, and should be, with surreal runway shows that tend towards performance art—in their 1999 "Babushka" show, for example, they sent the model Maggie Rizer down the catwalk wearing 10 different outfits, then painstakingly undressed her, Russian-doll style, in front of the audience. If that doesn't whet the appetite enough, the radical architect Siebe Tettero—who designed Viktor & Rolf's infamous upside-down shop in Milan—is helping stage the exhibition; the rumour is he's building a giant doll's house in which to show the clothes. Go play. ~ MARY FELLOWES

The House of Viktor & Rolf Barbican Art Gallery, London, June 18th to September 21st
barbican.org.uk

PETER STIGTER CAMERA PRESS

THE DOCTOR LANDS IN DENMARK

It's the Prince from another planet: David Tennant (*above*)—easily the best-loved Doctor Who since Jon Pertwee—will be landing his Tardis at the Royal Shakespeare Company this summer, to take the lead in Gregory Doran's production of "Hamlet". It's a sharper piece of casting than you might think. Tennant's major key may be zesty, endearing comedy, but he's adept at the darker minor chords of the emotional scale—think of his hitherto angry, comically impulsive victim of brain injury weeping with loss at the end of Tony Marchant's 2007 BBC drama "Recovery", or the almost-normal, stalker boyfriend he played in ITV's chilly Nicci French adaptation, "Secret Smile" (2005). He also has an impressive theatre pedigree, including a fevered, mesmeric Jimmy Porter in a 2005 revival of "Look Back in Anger" for the Edinburgh Royal Lyceum, and several successful outings for the RSC before that, including a well-received Romeo in 2000. Most promisingly, his interpretation reminded several critics of Hamlet—albeit a moody teenage version. In an RSC interview, Doran himself expressed faith that his star will shine at the "forlorn...melancholy and very witty" aspects of the character, with the reservation that "there are areas of [Hamlet's] melancholy and reflection that David may have to tackle". He should have more confidence: Tennant has always excelled at lightning emotional U-turns, the motor that drives the role (Robert Lindsay, arguably the greatest Hamlet of the 1980s, had something of that same quicksilver nature). Though we're not able to travel in time, the omens look good. All together now: "Hamlet—look out!" ~ ISABEL LLOYD

Hamlet Courtyard, Stratford, July 24th to November 15th rsc.org.uk

THEATRE AT A GLANCE

Afterlife (National, London, June 3rd to August 16th). After Nansen and Macmillan, the National continues its explorations of real lives with Michael Frayn's new play about the ground-breaking Hollywood impresario Max Reinhardt, played by the lovably sombre Roger Allam.

The Bacchae (Aberdeen, Inverness and New York, June 19th to July 13th). Following the powerful Iraq war drama "Black Watch", another mouth-watering revival from the National Theatre of Scotland. Alan Cumming's tri-sexual, hairy-legged Dionysus is a perfect god for the 21st century.

Hay Fever (Royal Exchange, Manchester, July 1st to August 9th). In the wrong hands, Coward can be creaky, but two comic virtuosos—Belinda Lang and Ben Keaton—should bring the necessary lightness of touch.

Gigi (Regent's Park Open Air, London, August 6th to September 13th). Lisa O'Hare—fresh from touring America as a plucky Eliza Doolittle—takes on another Audrey Hepburn role in Lerner and Loewe's love song to Paris. She's joined by old stagers Topol and Millicent Martin—oh yes, we remember them well.

BOOK NOW

Billy Elliot (Imperial, New York, from October 1st, public booking opens June 15th). Little northern lad dances his way to Broadway. ~ IL

BEN AFFLECK
FINDS HIS NICHE

In the decade since Ben Affleck and Matt Damon won an Oscar each for co-writing "Good Will Hunting", Damon's star hasn't stopped rising, while his old buddy has become synonymous with bad performances in worse films ("Gigli", "Pearl Harbour", "Surviving Christmas"). But now, with his uncompromising directorial debut, it's Affleck's turn to prove that he has a talent for something apart from romancing starlets named Jennifer. "Gone Baby Gone" is a grim detective mystery set in the same crumbling, working-class Boston neighbourhoods as "Good Will Hunting". Co-written by Affleck, and based on a novel by Dennis Lehane ("Mystic River"), it features the director's younger brother, Casey Affleck (*pictured*), as a private eye searching for a missing four-year-old girl. The plot is reminiscent of two high-profile recent news stories, but "Gone Baby Gone" would be tough to watch even if it didn't remind audiences of the past year's headlines. The hero is dragged through a netherworld of dingy bars and drug dens until he can no longer tell who's friend and who's foe, and, finally, he's faced with a moral dilemma which will have audiences arguing all the way home. It's one of the most gripping, satisfying, yet uncomfortable crime thrillers in years. And you couldn't say that about "Gigli". ~ NICHOLAS BARBER

Gone Baby Gone [illegible]

FILM AT A GLANCE

The Incredible Hulk (UK opening June 13th). The jolly green giant gets a strong new cast, including Tim Roth, William Hurt and, as both star and co-writer, Edward Norton. Unlike Ang Lee's misbegotten 2003 version, it has no mutant poodles.

Wall-e (July 18th). Pixar rewrite the rules again. An almost silent movie, with squeaks instead of dialogue.

The Dark Knight (July 25th). All eyes will be on the late Heath Ledger, barely recognisable as a shambling, cackling Joker who makes Jack Nicholson seem well-adjusted

Lou Reed's Berlin (July 25th). The art-house answer to Scorsese's Rolling Stones film: Julian Schnabel documents the gig of the heroically sombre concept album. ~ NB

ZARAGOZA
TAKES THE PLUNGE

World fairs are epic events—festi-vals of architecture and entertainment that also highlight matters of global importance. They date back to 1851 and are responsible for landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and Crystal Palace. This year the baton is handed to Spain. Expo Zaragoza is a 93-day spectacular on the theme of water and sustainable development. The projected 6m visitors will arrive via a bridge designed by Zaha Hadid (*see feature, page 62*), at a site offering innovative design, endless activities and entertainment from 3,400 acts. The street performers regaling the crowds will include a big name: Cirque du Soleil. With white-water rafting, sailing, an aquarium and Bob Dylan turning up to play "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall"—Expo's unlikely theme song—visitors are not going to be at a loose end. But it's not just one big theme park. Expo is also a forum for understanding and debate, so join scientists, politicians and artists and have your say. ~ LUCY FARMER

Expo Zaragoza [illegible]

EXHIBITIONS AT A GLANCE

The Image Revealed: First Photographs on Paper in Great Britain (Musée d'Orsay, Paris, May 27th to September 7th) A show of early paper-negative photography (calotypes) with a meaty anthropological twist: most of the pictures were taken by gentlemen hobbyists in the mid-19th century.

Gustav Klimt (Tate Liverpool, May 30th to August 31st) In 2006, a single painting by this leader of the Viennese Secession fetched $135m. Now he's the subject of a comprehensive survey, his first in Britain.

Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling (MoMA, New York, July 20th to October 20th). Architects have long considered the challenge of making cheap, pre-fabricated homes look good. Results have been mixed, but new designs are often remarkable. This show spans 180 years and features full-size models on the museum's lot.

Love (National Gallery, London, July 24th to October 5th). How do you depict love? Artists have struggled with the question for centuries, as an impressive if unwieldy-looking show illustrates, gathering Chagall, Vermeer, Hockney and Tracey Emin under its amorous umbrella. ~ EMILY BOBROW

THE MASTERPIECE IN THE ART OF VODKA

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SWITZERLAND 1 AUSTRIA 0

This summer's big football tournament, Euro 2008, is split between Switzerland and Austria—but not evenly. The neutrals in Switzerland (are there any other kind?) will see some of Europe's best and brightest footballers, while their Austrian neighbours have to make do with what some have rudely dubbed the Anschluss group—Austria, Germany, Poland and Croatia—plus the odd brilliant young Spaniard (Fernando Torres, Cesc Fabregas) and the gifted, lanky, volatile Swede Zlatan Ibrahimovic (*right*). Contrast this with what UEFA's ping-pong balls arranged for the two Swiss-based groups. They get the world champions (Italy), the world runners-up (France), the always entertaining Dutch, Cristiano Ronaldo and his Portuguese team-mates, plus dangerous outsiders such as Romania and the Czech Republic. No prizes for guessing where the world's media will be based. Don't expect another gritty underdog to shock the world as Greece did in 2004. The big boys are a safer bet; though probably not Italy, who are ageing and under reconstruction, or Germany, who were rather flattered by their World Cup semi-final place in 2006. The smart money is on Spain to end their underachieving ways. Barring that, France—with Patrick Vieira, Thierry Henry and Lilian Thuram coming off disappointing seasons at club level—might just have enough hunger to take it. Two group matches stand out. Germany v Poland (June 8th, Klagenfurt) features two goalies going in opposite directions, in the veteran Jens Lehmann and the up-and-coming Artur Boruc. France v Italy (June 17th, Zurich) is a replay of the 2006 World Cup final—with no Zidane, probably no headbutts, but plenty of edge. ~ GABRIELE MARCOTTI

Euro 2008 *June 7th to 29th. euro2008.uefa.com*

AIN'T NO SUNSHINE

No need to go south for the sun this summer: head north for the total eclipse on August 1st. All morning (GMT), the moon will cast its umbral shadow in a 250km, two-minute band across Canada, the Arctic, Russia and Siberia, ending in Henan province, China. Book a spot on an Arctic icebreaker or a polar "flightseeing" tour above the clouds, or stay at home for the partial eclipse over much of Europe and Asia. For links to maps, go to moreintelligentlife.com. ~ CAROLINE CARTER

A MEXICAN DON CARLO

Nicholas Hytner's new pro-duction of Verdi's heretic-burning masterpiece "Don Carlo" for the Royal Opera sold out two months ago. The crowd-puller is the glorious Mexican lyric tenor Rolando Villazón (*below*), who made his name with multiple standing ovations for "Tales of Hoffman" at Covent Garden in 2004. The possible snag is that he has cancelled easier repertoire recently. Most tenors lock their doors when Don Carlo comes to town, and the role's Wagnerian heft will certainly stretch Villazón. It's not all about him, though: Simon Keenlyside, who sings Rodrigo, is a dead cert, and there is the winsome Marina Poplavskaya as Elisabetta. Beefier, more experienced sopranos have come a cropper during Elisabetta's colossal Act V sing, but Poplavskaya's goose-bump lyric soprano may surprise the non-believers. "It's not size of role that is challenge," Poplavskaya says. "It is finding something in her that people will like." Very true: Elisabetta spends five hours being miserable while the plot-stirring firecracker Eboli (sung here by the mezzo Sonia Ganassi) gets great tunes for half the work. So—does Poplavskaya think Villazón *will* sing? "I am lighting candle every day," she says. ~ ROSIE JOHNSTON

Don Carlo *Royal Opera House, London. June 6th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 20th, 26th, 29th; July 3rd. royaloperahouse.org*

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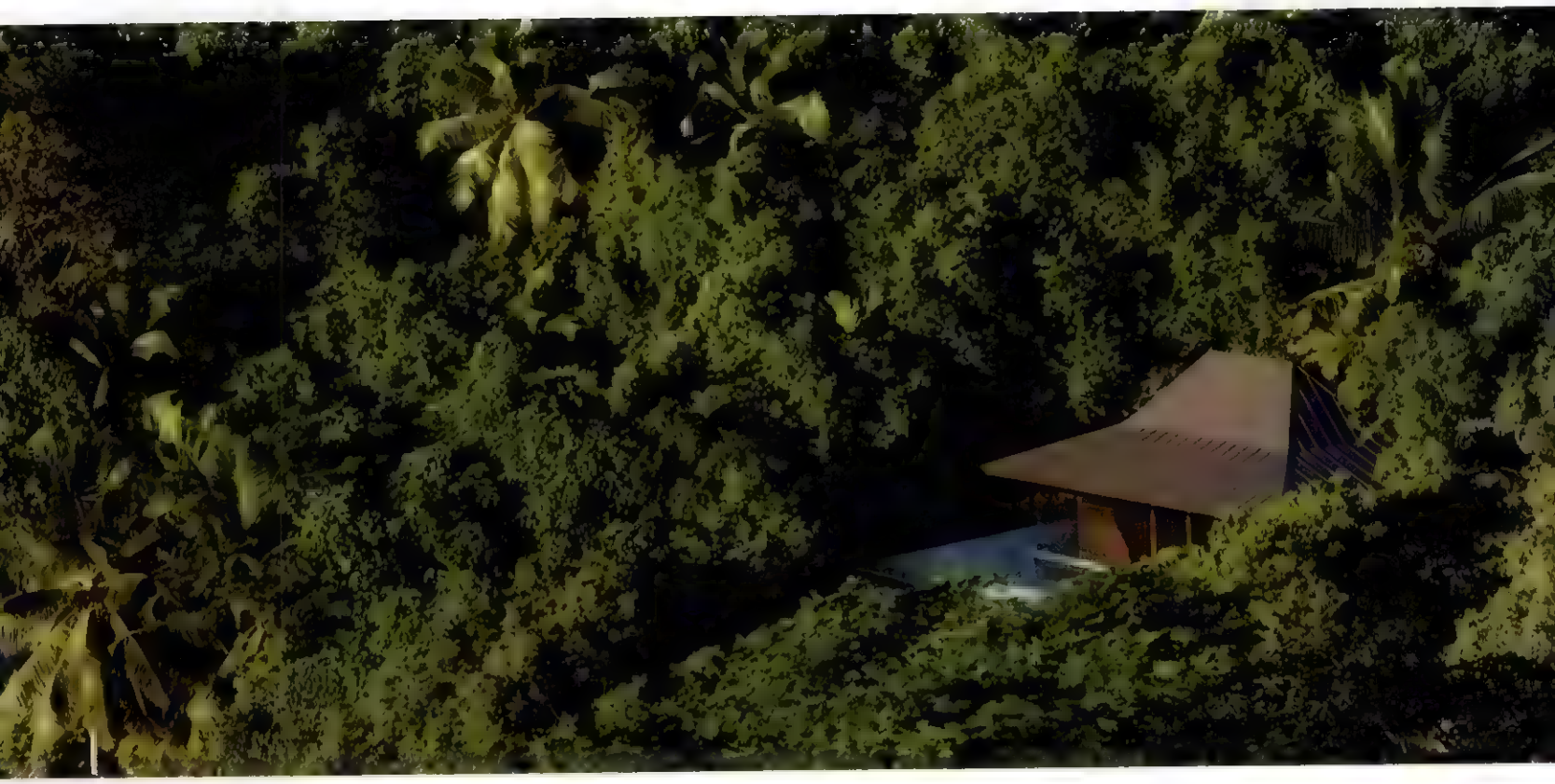

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My life in 24 flavours

FOOD

Papa was an Italian ice-cream maker. ANNALISA BARBIERI on a sweet childhood

IT WASN'T MY first taste of ice cream, but it was the first ice cream I remember. My mother made it, and she set the bar high. It was white—very white—and in it she'd put all sorts of things: dried fruit, curls of crystallised, candied citrus peel, and half spheres of toasted hazelnuts from my aunt's farm in Italy. It was the perfect "ice cream with bits": each mouthful yielded some crunch, some chew. But I was horribly cheated. As I remember it, I ate some—my mother hadn't made very much—and then it went back into the fridge. I opened and closed the icebox's plasticky little door many times, shaving off bits of overgrown ice as I did so, wondering if I could justify stealing the last few mouthfuls without sharing. And then, with no such indecision, someone else ate it. I never got to taste that ice cream again; when I asked my mother if she could remake it, she said she couldn't remember how she'd done it, which just made it more precious than ever. I've been searching for it ever since.

Ice cream has always featured large in my life. On Sunday, after church, my father, sister and I would go to Bobby's newsagent for ice cream: the choice was limited. We always wanted raspberry ripple, but sometimes we had to have Neapolitan, a striped brick of red, white and brown meant to be strawberry, vanilla and chocolate flavour, but which didn't taste like any of them. Sometimes, on hot summer afternoons, my mother would buy us small vanilla blocks and square wafer cones to fit them into, on the way home from school.

All of this changed the day after my seventh birthday. My parents opened a café on London's Bayswater Road. It was 1973 and we sold cappuccino; in those days this was practically unheard of outside of Soho, so we had to explain endlessly that it was frothy coffee. We also sold Marine Ices: ice cream from a factory in Chalk Farm, which arrived in tall, thin, churn-like tins. These resided, about eight of them, in an orange, lean-into fridge, and featured pistachio, hazelnut, *fior di latte* and *zabaglione* (the last two, regarded as too foreign, were soon dropped)—flavours I'd previously only seen for sale in Italy, where even the most modest village has an ice-cream parlour with a choice running into double figures. It meant we never had to buy ice cream again—although none of the flavours my father sold had bits in. And I wanted bits.

When my father was 60 he retired. But he was restless. The year he turned 70, he bought the shop next door to his old café. He announced he was going to make and sell proper Italian ice cream—which has a softer texture than other recipes, although without descending to Mr Whippy's levels of aeration. He learnt how to make ice cream, and bought lots of machinery, the principal piece of which looked like a large washing machine and was called *il mantecatore*—the churner. I later found out it had been a boyhood dream of his to open an ice-cream parlour but he'd never had the money for the equipment.

> IN ITALY, EVEN THE MOST MODEST VILLAGE HAS AN ICE-CREAM PARLOUR WITH A CHOICE OF FLAVOURS RUNNING INTO DOUBLE FIGURES

The ingredients were simple: cream, milk, sugar and the relevant extras (high cocoa-content chocolate, pistachio nuts, strawberries, mangoes). Water, sugar and fruit for sorbets. They went into the churner and glooped in creamy soft folds, just minutes later, into their containers. Italian ice cream should be made regularly: after as little as 48 hours it doesn't taste the same any more. Three times a week, my father would start making ice cream at 5am. He always worked alone.

He opened on August Bank Holiday, 1999. I entered full of trepidation: my father had never made any sort of sweet thing before. What if it was rubbish? He stood behind his ice-cream display cabinet, all glass and stainless steel, with 24 flavours and tiny testing cones to help people navigate them. The little orange fridge seemed a long time ago. Some customers seemed confused by the vast choice and ended up going for safe flavours >

ILLUSTRATION EMMA GRIFFIN

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ROBERT BUTLER GOING GREEN

IT'S A DISASTER

SCIENTISTS HAVE COME up with plenty of good phrases to frighten us. They did well with "ozone depletion", "acid rain" and "H5N1". But when it comes to finding shorthand terms to express the full scariness of the predicament we now find ourselves in, the scientists have given us a couple of non-starters. Technically, there's a difference between "global warming" and "climate change". One is a subset of the other (global cooling, for instance, is also part of climate change). But for the general public, the terms have become interchangeable–and neither works.

The word "climate" has a cheerful, outdoorsy ring to it–people often move to a place because of the climate–and for many of us there's something positive, too, about "change". It has been the main theme of Barack Obama's campaign for the Democratic nomination. We all need change in our lives. Put it together with climate and the result can't be that terrible, can it?

"GLOBAL" HAS A MODERN, BUSINESSLIKE RING, AND "WARMING" SEEMS LIKE A PLUS AS NOT TOO MANY OF US LIKE TO GET COLD

The alternative is no better, because it doesn't sound any worse. "Global" has a modern, businesslike ring to it, and "warming" seems like a plus because not too many people like to get cold. Is this part of the problem? The marketing writer Seth Godin thinks so. The author of the bestselling "Purple Cow" (2003, about how ideas stand out from the crowd), Godin reckons the majority of the population has barely grasped the seriousness of the state we're in. "If the problem were called 'atmosphere cancer' or 'pollution death'," he has said, "the entire conversation would be framed in a different way."

Professor Tim Flannery, author of "The Weather Makers–The History and Future Impact of Climate Change" (2006), agrees. "If scientists were predicting the imminent return of the ice age," he writes, "I'm certain our response would be more robust. 'Global warming' creates an illusion of a comfortable, warm future that is deeply appealing, for we are an essentially tropical species that has spread into all the corners of the globe, and cold has long been our greatest enemy."

The thing we are talking about here didn't start out as "climate change". In the early 20th century, it was known as "climatic change". In 1975 Wallace Broecker, a scientist from the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in New York, wrote an influential paper for the journal *Science* entitled "Climatic Change: Are We on the Brink of a Pronounced Global Warming?".

The phrase "global warming" took off in June 1988, when Jim Hansen, head of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, testified to Congress that he was "99% sure" that global warming was happening and that it was probably caused by humans. Which phrase, then, is more appropriate? The Environmental Protection Agency says that the balance is shifting towards "climate change".

This isn't just because alliteration, even of the partial variety, nearly always wins. "The phrase 'climate change' is growing in preferred use to 'global warming'," says the EPA, "because it helps convey that there are changes in addition to rising temperatures." It should be good news for the Republican consultant Frank Luntz. A master euphemist who prefers to call oil drilling "energy exploration", Luntz has argued that Republicans should use "climate change" instead of "global warming" because it sounds neutral and plays down any aspect of human involvement.

Others who feel that neither expression is up to the job are busy coining their own terms. James Lovelock, the author of "Gaia" (1979) and "The Revenge of Gaia" (2006), goes for "global heating" because it suggests the idea that someone is doing it. The scientist and environmentalist Amory Lovins calls it "global weirding". Prince Charles calls it "climate war". John P. Holdren, professor of environmental policy at Harvard, wants "global climate disruption"; he feels that people have become anaesthetised to the other labels. The rabbi and activist Arthur Waskow calls it "global scorching".

The former vice-president Al Gore calls it "the climate crisis" or "the planetary emergency". The eco-website Grist offered "xtreme weather" and "climApocalypse", and for soccer moms it suggested "global property value destruction" (OK, this was on April 1st).

Out in the blogosphere, there are now enough synonyms for a full-page entry in Roget's Thesaurus: "global meltdown", "climate chaos", "climate disruption", "global fever", "thermageddon", "the warmacaust", "heat pollution", "climate destabilisation", "solar grilling" and "climate doomsday".

Whichever one you choose, the concept will always be a tough sell. The business author Tom Peters asks: "Why is this brand called the global warming catastrophe such a weak brand?" One reader answered, "You can't sell global warming–there's nothing to buy." The only time when there will be plenty on offer will be the day of the closing-down sale ("everything must go").

One option might be to call it what it actually is: "global mean temperature increase". No one likes mean. Mean is bad. No one likes a temperature–you only have one when you're ill. But it may be asking too much for a four-word term to replace a two-word one. Otherwise, the best suggestion I've come across is the German term ***Klimakatastrophe***, which was chosen as Germany's word of the year in 2007. There's an expression that could keep you awake at night. ■

Robert Butler is [illegible]directory.org.uk. His blog about the environment and the arts [illegible]blogspot.com

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Hi-tech meets the age of sail

DESIGN

You don't need a weatherstation to know which way the wind blows, but it helps. And it may even be stylish. NONIE NIESEWAND takes a look

THE WEATHER HAS ever been an obsession of the British. We talk about it, we try to predict it. And we measure it: with thermometers, barometers and anemometers, with cups to catch rain-water and vanes to catch the wind. Type "weatherstations" into a search engine and you'll get page after page of hi-tech instrumentation: bedside clocks that sense what the cloud cover is like outside; wristwatches that measure UV radiation; PC plug-ins that will tell you when the dew will start to fall.

Such things have their own design language, much of it taken from the world of computing: digital, touchscreen or LCD displays, silver-coloured boxing, buttons to press, functions to program. These objects tell their owner that he or she is a scientist, a person of technical intellect, someone who is not at the mercy of the weather but, very possibly, in charge of it.

Look behind the scenes, though, and much of the measuring is done in the way it always was. Traditional weather vanes have been bird-shaped since the ninth century, when a papal edict placed a cockerel on every church steeple—a reminder not to deny Christ as St Peter did, thrice "before the cock crows". The broad, flat shape set around a central spindle proved perfect for catching and spinning in the wind; indeed, most modern vanes still have a "tail' that—if you squint into the sun—could pass for a cockerel's. (What does one manufacturer choose to call its range of hand-held devices for measuring windspeed? "Kestrels".)

Another theme is that of the Age of Sail, a Patrick O'Brian-ish harking back, via solid mahogany boxing and lots of polished brass, to the era when knowing that the glass was falling would make a ship's captain bring down the topmasts and order two reefs put in the maincourse. You can still buy barographs—revolving paper drums which record changes in barometric pressure over time—that look just as they would have done when they were invented, in the mid 19th-century. The appeal here must be the cultural memory that such things prod into life, of a time when the weather—or at least the wind—drove British commerce and power across the surface of the globe.

Meanwhile, some modern, entirely digital barometers (which of course show only the current atmospheric pressure) are dressed up with polished wood mounts—an obvious visual piggy-backing on the old "banjo" style of barometer that used to hang in every suburban hallway. These designs are clearly intended to reassure us that measuring the weather has authenticity, roots and weight: it is not in any way flighty, nerdy or neurotic.

The device that is freest of all baggage is also perhaps the most strangely beautiful. The Campbell Stokes Sunshine Recorder is the child of two fathers. In 1853 John Campbell, an amateur scientist, took the schoolboy game of burning a dry leaf with a magnifying glass a step further, fixing a glass ball into a wooden bowl in such a way that the concentrated rays of the sun scorched marks on the wooden surface. By 1879 Sir George Stokes had modified the original model, putting the glass ball into a metal half-moon housing, and recording the sun's burns onto paper cards marked with the hours. It's still one of the most common ways of measuring sunshine hours and intensity—and is particularly popular with seaside borough councils. ■

COME RAIN, COME SHINE FIVE ELEMENTAL DEVICES

BA 900 Crystal Weather Station (*pictured, centre*) Not just a pretty (clock) face. A remote sensor prompts predictive weather icons to light up in this bi-coloured block of acrylic. *Oregon Scientific, oregonscientific.co.uk. £129.99 (€162)*

Kestrel 4500 (*pictured, second left*) Measures the wind's speed, temperature, chill factor and direction. Who needs a wet forefinger? *Nielsen Kellerman; nkhome.com. £311 (€389)*

Seawatch UV Using the World Health Organisation's global solar UV index, this beeps to alert wearers should they exceed recommended levels of sun exposure *JDC Electronic; jdc.ch. £36 (€45)*

WS7038 Wireless Rain Monitor One for horticulturalists: a wall-mounted digital panel records rainfall, via a wireless link to a self-emptying bucket in the garden. *LaCrosse; lacrossetechnology.fr £59.95 (€75)*

Angler's Edge Plus AE-2 A tiny handset that predicts fishes' feeding activity, based on the phases of the moon and barometric pressure *Speedtech Instruments; speedtech.com From £79.95 (€99)*

How's the weather looking?
More than 130 years of instrumental design represented by (*from left*) the Campbell Stokes Sunshine Recorder, first built in 1879, a Kestrel pocket anemometer and a beds de weatherstation by Oregon, both launched last year; an antique barograph, c1900, from Trevor Philips & Sons in London, and TFA Dostmann's latest design, the top of the-range "Nexus" wireless weatherstation and windvane

PHOTOGRAPH *JOBE LAWRENSON*

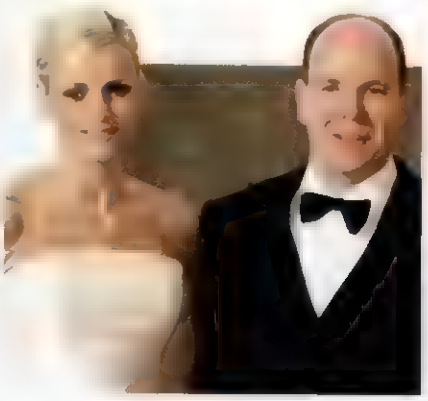
Europe gets the bug

GIVING

American-style philanthropy is catching on over here. MATTHEW BISHOP explains

A COUPLE OF hundred wealthy continental Europeans gathered in the achingly modern Philharmonie concert hall in Luxembourg on April 23rd. The reason? To discuss "seizing the opportunity for philanthropy" in a country traditionally known for helping the rich to keep more of their money from the tax man, not for encouraging them to give it away. Even the prime minister showed up, promising new laws to help turn Luxembourg into a centre for European philanthropy.

This is the latest evidence that the philanthropy boom that has been under way for a decade or so in America, and for a few years in Britain, is now spreading to continental Europe. The symposium was organised by the Banque de Luxembourg, which is responding to demand from its wealthiest clients for help and advice on giving. The bank believes that this is a big opportunity to win new, more enlightened customers—though the reality is that wealthy Europeans are increasingly telling their bankers that if they do not offer useful help with their philanthropy, they will take their money to a bank that can.



Helping out Prince Albert of Monaco (with his girlfriend, Charlene Wittstock) has both raised and given money for good causes

Similar pressures have already led banks in Switzerland to build serious philanthropic advisory businesses. UBS, for example, has hosted a well-regarded philanthropy forum there since 2005. Even Monaco, famous as the European playground of the rich tax exile, has started to re-brand itself as a home of philanthropy. The symbol of this is Prince Albert, who has raised and given money to protect endangered species, and teamed up to fight climate change with the UN foundation created by the American billionaire Ted Turner. Last September, the prince hosted a glitzy Blue Auction at which wealthy bidders competed for the naming rights to ten newly discovered species, including a walking shark.

Meanwhile, in Germany, about 1,000 new charitable foundations were created last year, a record. Much of this is the result of a decade-long effort to promote philanthropy by the huge Bertelsmann Foundation, which owns the media conglomerate of the same name, and there is growing speculation that the company's matriarch, Liz Mohn, is about to launch a dramatic increase in the amount that the foundation gives away. There is also a rise in the number of foundations being set up in traditionally *étatiste* France—admittedly promoted by a state-created entity, the Fondation de France.

A preference for statist solutions is the most common explanation for why continental European philanthropy has lagged behind its counterparts in more laissez-faire Britain and, especially, America. Yet a century ago, philanthropy was as vibrant among the newly rich industrialists on the continent as it was in Britain and America. And even during the second half of the 20th century, charitable foundations played an important role, albeit largely unrecognised, in shaping post-war Europe, according to a fascinating new book, "Philanthropy in Europe: A Rich Past, a Promising Future", by Norine McDonald and Luc Tayart de Borms.

One reason this role has been unrecognised is that, in contrast to their counterparts in Britain and America, wealthy continental Europeans have tended not to shout about their philanthropy, preferring to do it below the radar. Why is much debated: a less individualistic, Catholic culture? A reluctance to draw their wealth to the attention of the tax man? Events such as the Blue Auction suggest this is starting to change. And there are now leading European philanthropists willing to talk about their giving and urge others to do so, such as the Swiss billionaire Stephan Schmidheiny, who has given away hundreds of millions of euros to causes in Latin America.

In America and Britain the new generation of philanthropists have emphasised their determination to make a real impact with their giving, often by applying the sort of business thinking that helped them make their money to solving society's biggest problems. It remains to be seen if continental Europeans will embrace this philanthro-capitalism. Some critics think the rise in foundations in Germany, for example, has less to do with giving than with retaining control of family businesses.

Yet there are some promising signs. Etienne Eichenberger of Wise in Geneva, one of a new crop of continental philanthropy advisory firms, says he sees "more and more European families taking a strategic approach to their giving". The European Venture Philanthropy Association, founded in 2004 to promote innovative ways of giving, now boasts members from nine countries, including a magnificently named Italian outfit, Fondazione Oliver Twist.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to even faster growth is that, compared with America and Britain, it can be hard to create a charitable foundation in some European countries and there are none of the tax advantages. Much may hang on the fate of an attempt under way in Brussels to create a new European foundation law. ■

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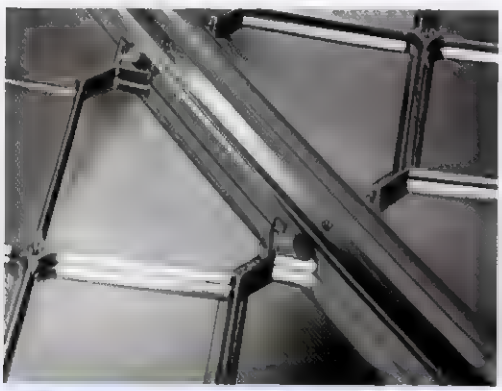
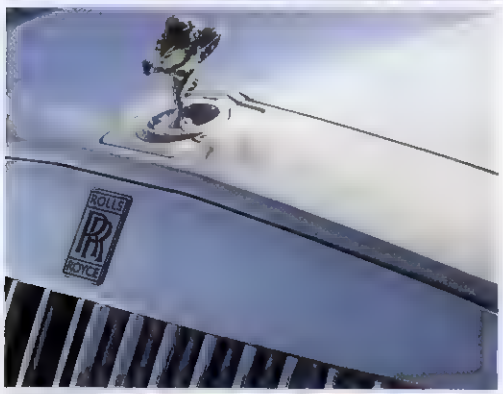
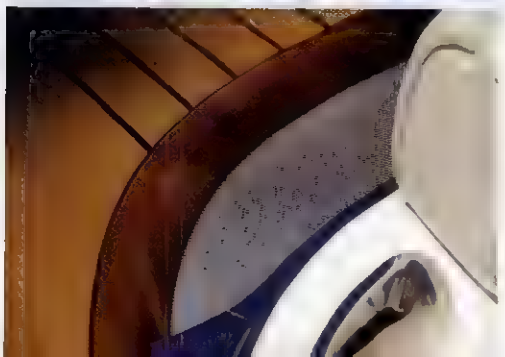
Roof down, sales up

CARS

Convertibles are doing a roaring trade. PAUL MARKILLIE reports from a soft-top Rolls







THE ROAR OF the motorway has been left behind along with the curious looks. On a deserted country lane, the time has come to abandon the balm of climate control. Flip open a centre console, hold back a small lever and a whirring begins as five layers of canvas lined with cashmere rise high into the air, fold up and quickly disappear behind the rear seats. Then a smart teak-planked tonneau cover plops into place. A little bell, of the kind that might be used to summon a butler, announces that all is complete. It is time to point the flying-lady perched on the front of the super-long bonnet between the hedgerows, to press the accelerator and go.

The warmth of sunshine feels good, the breeze refreshing and the birdsong unusually loud. Normally the burble and rasp of the exhaust sets the note for driving a convertible high-performance car along a back road—the best place to do so. With a 6.7-litre V12 engine there is plenty of performance, but the car is almost silent. Much nicer to amble along majestically, and to chime in with the many touches from an earlier era of motoring: the thin steering wheel, the clock in the centre of the dashboard, the abundance of wood and leather. Even the car's name is an echo of the past. The Rolls-Royce Phantom Drophead Coupé, all £307,000 of it, glides effortlessly to the top of topless motoring.

FIVE LAYERS OF CANVAS LINED WITH CASHMERE RISE HIGH INTO THE AIR, FOLD UP AND QUICKLY DISAPPEAR BEHIND THE REAR SEATS A SMART TEAK-LINED TONNEAU COVER PLOPS INTO PLACE, AND A LITTLE BELL ANNOUNCES THAT ALL IS COMPLETE

This is a rarefied field. Last year about 900,000 convertibles were sold worldwide—a fraction of the 70m cars that rattled off production lines. But the number is steadily growing. Some places are more in love with convertibles than others. Britain and Germany are Europe's hottest soft-top markets: the share of convertibles in Britain has more than doubled in the past decade, with just over 100,000 sold last year, representing 4.4% of the market. In America, more than 250,000 convertibles were sold, but that was just 1.6% of sales.

In hot and very sunny places, roof-down motoring can be uncomfortable, so convertibles often don't sell as well as they do in temperate climes. But even if it is a bit chilly, northern Europeans quickly drop the hood at a glint of

NEARLY ALL MANUFACTURERS NOW HAVE A CONVERTIBLE OR TWO IN THEIR RANGE, AND THEY OFTEN USE THEM TO FRONT THEIR ADVERTISING

sunshine—especially if they are new owners. With the windows up and the heater on, it can be surprisingly cosy. Some convertibles also have a pop-up wind deflector behind the seats which can reduce the blast from the rear. When the roof is down, hair tends to be blown forwards. The air flowing up across the windscreen lowers the pressure inside the car, which causes air to rush in from the rear.

Technology has made living with convertibles much easier. Roofs fit better, leak less and are often electrically powered. Some models now have folding metal roofs. Growling along in a Healey 3000 or a Triumph Spitfire with the roof down can mean turning up with wild wind-blown hair and a waft of exhaust fumes. With a modern convertible and its aerodynamic tricks, you arrive feeling less battered.

That so many old convertibles remain on the road—even a few 1920s Phantom I Dropheads with their big pram-like hoods—is testament to their ability to avoid the scrapyard. This is because, from super-luxury to the mass market, convertibles share a sort of specialness that seems to endure. Being cherished by a succession of owners also means they tend to depreciate in value more slowly than many other cars.

But most of all, convertibles look good. Nearly all manufacturers now have one or more in their range, and they often use them to front their advertising, even though they sell in relatively small numbers. Nor is building a convertible as simple as removing the roof from an existing model. Rolls-Royce, which has been owned by BMW for the past ten years, took a classic approach to completely redesigning its Phantom saloon to make the new Drophead. It has coach-style rear-hinged doors (to help with the extra rigidity that a convertible needs) and a sit-on picnic-style boot. A quarter of the cars leaving Rolls-Royce's new factory at Goodwood are now Phantom Dropheads. And as most of them will be driven by their owners rather than chauffeured, this shows what is perhaps the key characteristic of topless motoring: these are cars for people who enjoy driving. ■

SOME CHEAPER OPTIONS

Not all soft-tops cost £300,000. Here are five more affordable options—you could buy the lot for less than the Rolls and still have a hundred grand left over. Prices are British, checked in late April.

FASTEST (OF THIS BUNCH) Mercedes-Benz SL 350 Epitome of a German roadster, from £65,000

SEXIEST Alfa Romeo Spider As good-looking as in "The Graduate", from £25,500

CHEAPEST Mini Cooper Convertible More fun without the roof, from £14,970

BEEFIEST Land Rover Defender SVX Convertible Yes, even they make one (price tba)

GREENEST BMW 1 Series Convertible Starts at 134g/km CO_2, from £22,330

ESPIONAGE
RETURN TO SENDER

ALAN JUDD SETS UP A DEAD LETTER BOX—AND A CHALLENGE

FOR ONCE, SPY fiction and real life agree: a DLB is a dead letter box, a hiding place for messages, money, passports or whatever; a means of communication between case officer and agent. Despite the convenience of electronic DLBs, physical ones are still used.

Finding a good place for one isn't easy. It has to fit the agent's daily routine or explicable journeys, be easy to locate but not too vulnerable to discovery, be conveniently filled and emptied, and be reasonably weatherproof.

Cubicles in public loos are a traditional favourite. They are private, the agent has obvious reason to be there, and all manner of objects—including cassettes, bundles of cash, CDs and memory sticks—can be taped to the undersides of removable cistern lids. But the loo has to be one that the agent might plausibly use: not everyone visits the Ritz, and those who do need a jacket and tie; nor does everyone feel comfortable hanging around Piccadilly Underground station. Timing matters—some loos close at certain hours—and agent and case officer have to be the same gender.

The most meticulously researched DLBs can still go wrong. I heard of one in a blind corner of some hotel stairs that was swift and safe and could be invisibly emptied or filled in seconds. But when the agent came he found fire engines and a smoking ruin. You always need a fallback.

There is also the story of an energetic but unreflecting case officer whose agent would regularly go for runs along a certain beach. The officer found a neat hole in a timber breakwater that could be discreetly serviced while clambering over it. But he neglected to consult the tide tables, and when the agent crunched heroically through the shingle the DLB was at full fathom five.

A luckier spy should walk down London's St James's Street, from Piccadilly. About half way down on the left is The Economist Plaza, with its wide concrete steps divided by a concrete balustrade and a red metal sign proclaiming the address. Somewhere in this area, *Intelligent Life* has created a temporary DLB. To find it, the spy should not do what I did, which was to climb the steps and turn left into a small courtyard off the main plaza. This had a promising sculpture fixed to the facing wall, above what appeared, in the dusk, to be a low metal plinth. Curious, I approached the sculpture and stepped on the plinth. It was not metal, but six inches of water. Yes, both feet.

A more capable spy would keep their feet dry, and spot the DLB. In it, if you are lucky—and are the first to get there—you will find an empty packet of Mayfair Superkings, with "RIP" written in blue biro on the outside, beneath the words "Smoking Kills". Inside the carton will be one half of a foreign currency note. Take the note to reception in The Economist Building at the top of the steps, along with a written note of the names of the first chiefs of MI5 and MI6 (a clue: they were both appointed in 1909). On production of the correct answer—and assuming your banknote matches the other half held at reception—you will win a free family ticket to the Ian Fleming exhibition, "For Your Eyes Only", at the Imperial War Museum. If there's no packet, no scrawled RIP, no half banknote, assume all is discovered—and flee for your life.

For competition rules, see left

THIS FREE COMPETITION IS NOT OPEN TO EMPLOYEES OF THE ECONOMIST NEWSPAPER LIMITED, OR ITS SUBSIDIARIES, OR THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES. THE PRIZE CANNOT BE EXCHANGED FOR MONEY OR OTHER GOODS. "FOR YOUR EYES ONLY" ENDS MARCH 1ST 2009. THE FAMILY TICKET GIVES ENTRY TO TWO ADULTS AND TWO CHILDREN AGED 15 AND UNDER. THE ECONOMIST'S DECISION ON ALL MATTERS AFFECTING THIS COMPETITION IS FINAL AND BINDING. COMPETITION CLOSES SEPTEMBER 1ST 2008

ED SMITH THE GREAT SPORTSMEN

FEDERER: DREAMING OF MASTERY

ROGER FEDERER USUALLY behaves perfectly. He speaks as gracefully as he plays. He can conduct post-match press conferences in four languages. These things seem to come as naturally to Federer as being the greatest tennis player of all time. How cold, people say. How Swiss!

Perhaps nobody likes a goody two-shoes. That was Prince Hal's advice in Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part I":

And so when this loose behaviour I throw off,
...My reformation glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes,
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.

Everyone warms to a reformed character, Hal argues. People will love you for it all the more.

The opposite is also true, as Federer has discovered: if you start out impeccably, people search for any sign of moral decline or hypocrisy. After losing to Andy Murray last month, Federer was accused of gracelessness. What was the nature of the insult? He suggested that Murray might have to expand his game. Nasty stuff.

Federer gives the lie to several sporting clichés. First, he exposes the myth that all great champions must behave badly. Tyson chewed off part of Holyfield's ear; Zidane head-butted Materazzi; McEnroe screamed at umpires. They're all like that, aren't they? No, they're not. What about Bjorn Borg, Garry Sobers and Bobby Jones junior? Some are saints, some sinners. It's as unscientific as that.

But we live in a time of sporting moral equivalency. Most pundits, often ex-players, find moderately bad behaviour quaintly reassuring—it legitimises their own outlook. The really threatening thing is to behave well. That is what Federer is up against.

Federer turns 27 this summer. He has already won 12 Grand Slam singles titles (only the French Open eludes him) and appeared in a record ten consecutive men's Grand Slam finals. In March, he became Laureus World Sportsman of the Year for the fourth consecutive year. If he wins Wimbledon again this time, it will be for the sixth time in a row—beating the record he currently shares with Borg.

But recently his dominance has slipped. This year he lost in the semi-finals of the Australian Open, then in the first round at Dubai and again in the semis at the Indian Wells Masters. Since drifting apart from Tony Roche last year, Federer has not had an official coach. And though he seemed preoccupied by the forthcoming French Open, he bizarrely found time to play against the retired Pete Sampras in an exhibition game at Madison Square Garden in late March.

Now the idea is circulating that Federer is losing his hunger. What might keep him motivated? Rivalry, one suspects, is a bit beneath him. He and Rafael Nadal have enjoyed some great encounters, but you don't sense that personalising conflict helps to inspire him. He is not an innate pugilist.

Different things drive different egos. Some womanisers are happy with simply the most beautiful in the room—and there is always another evening and a new room. A different type of womaniser wants to seduce the most beautiful woman in the world. But what then?

So it is in sport. One type of champion lives for the fight, the thrill of battle. Winning is like a habit they cannot kick. The other sort of champion, the Federer type, dreams more of mastery. But mastery is total; once achieved, it can only subside. It is winning, not losing, that makes Federer act out of character—dropping to his knees, or lying flat on his back on the Wimbledon turf, in joyous disbelief. Why the surprise? When he is on form, especially on grass, he scarcely loses a set. Is the emotion real or imagined? Does Federer really cherish the moment of victory, the last point of the championship, as much as he claims to? I suspect his favourite point is actually a perfect backhand, hidden in the middle of a non-pivotal rally, unnoticed by people who watch the score, but unforgettable to those looking out for mastery.

MANY SPORTSMEN OWE THEIR SUCCESS TO HUGE WILLPOWER. BUT WITH FEDERER, THE SCORE SEEMS TO HAVE WRITTEN ITSELF

Federer has dominated tennis as Tiger Woods has ruled golf. But with Federer there is no trace of angsty chippiness. Conventional sporting wisdom is suspicious of so well-adjusted a champion. Can he sustain it? Will he keep his stomach for the fight? He'll lose hunger, you watch.

Maybe he will; maybe he has. But for many of us, Federer has not only played better than anyone, he has lived sport on a higher level. Many sportsmen owe their success to huge efforts of willpower. But with Federer, like Schubert, the score seems to have written itself.

Three factors work against him. One is straightforward jealousy. A second is the misconception that getting bored with being brilliant is somehow reprehensible. If Federer eventually becomes bored, why shouldn't he? We are in his debt, not he in ours. The third is the curse of over-professionalism. Where amateurism eulogised effortlessness, our professional mindset is suspicious of success without the sweat and tears of conspicuous suffering. Paradoxically, professionalism has compromised the primacy of performance—soap opera counts for just as much. Federer doesn't care for soap opera. If only we could reach up to his level, not demand he gets down to ours.

And so the question "Has he hurt enough?" seems to follow him around. But best of all, unlike Prince Hal, he doesn't seem to care. ■

Wimbledon [illegible] 6th wimbledon.org

The other man's grass
Inside the Heuhotel at Guttenberg, which offers sleeping arrangements both communal and private

HIT THE HAY

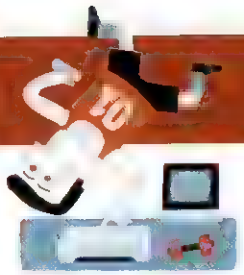
ZEITGEIST

THERE'S GREEN TRAVEL, and there's travel that's positively herbaceous. When you stay at a hay hotel, you sleep on piles of dried grass. They have sprung up in converted barns in Germany and elsewhere in the Lederhosen belt—Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein. By offering accommodation of medieval simplicity (but with better bathrooms), they tick a lot of eco-boxes: no new construction, not much laundry (you can hire sleeping bags or bring your own), rural employment, and low-impact tourism (they tend to attract hikers and cyclists). The hay hotel in a listed barn below the ramparts of Guttenberg castle (*pictured*), 45km from Heidelberg, sleeps up to 60 in shared rooms; valuables can be locked into wooden chests. For those who want more privacy—and hay-fever sufferers—there are 14 double rooms with conventional beds and a choice of feather or hay-filled pillows.

The concept is taking off for families cycling the bike trail through the Neckar valley, for corporate events (nothing like a dorm for helping your team bonding) and for weddings (at €19.50 a head including breakfast, the happy couple can afford to put up their friends after getting married in the castle chapel). The hay is from the second harvest rather than the first—it's softer—and it gets changed once or twice a year. Meanwhile there's strictly no smoking and there isn't a hospital corner in sight: making the bed means fluffing up the hay with a pitchfork. ~ REBECCA WILLIS

More information

GAMING
JUMP ON BOARD



TOM STANDAGE GETS SOME EXERCISE

DOES STANDING ON a white plastic board and assuming a yoga pose, while trying to keep a skittering dot on a TV screen inside a circular target, count as exercise? I'm not convinced, but this is what Nintendo wants you to believe. The plastic board, which resembles a set of bathroom scales, is the centrepiece of Wii Fit, a new set of games that supposedly turns Nintendo's hugely popular Wii console into a fitness centre.

It is not quite as nutty as it sounds. Sensors inside the board measure your weight and make educated guesses, as you lean in various directions, about your posture. You can then choose between various exercises, including yoga poses, balance games and aerobic workouts. Unlike with a fitness DVD, the board means the Wii can check that you are really doing the exercises, and monitor your performance. There's a simulated hula-hoop game where you wiggle your hips to keep an increasing number of hoops circling the waist of a cartoonish on-screen figure. You can step on and off the board to do step-training exercises, and do push-ups in the usual way, but with your hands on the board.

Most tiring of all is the jogging. You put one of the Wii's motion-sensitive controllers in your pocket and run on the spot. The Wii figures out how fast you are running and your alter-ego trots through scrolling on-screen scenery at the appropriate pace. After several minutes of this, it felt as though I had actually done some exercise—because I had. Simply waving the controller up and down by hand proved much less taxing.

It was all a bit worthy, frankly. The game can calculate your body-mass index and monitor your progress towards a particular goal—to lose a certain amount of weight within a month, for example. Wii Fit has been out for several months in Japan, and some people really have lost weight using it.

But never mind the serious stuff—the best thing about Wii Fit is that some of the mini-games are simply hilarious. There's a great ski-jumping game in which you crouch down, build up speed by keeping as steady as possible, and then jump by straightening your legs. Another game involves rolling balls around a tilting maze by shifting your weight on the board, and trying to drop the balls into a hole. My favourite was a game in which you have to head footballs by leaning from side to side. After a while pandas and football boots, which you are supposed to avoid, are mixed in. It sounds daft, but as with many other Wii games, using physical movements to control the on-screen action makes it oddly compelling. Children will love it, and that gives adults—even those who do not consider themselves gamers—an excuse to have a go too.

Wii Fit neatly advances Nintendo's campaign to broaden the appeal of video gaming, and to dent the widely held beliefs that all games are violent and that gamers are anti-social slobs. But it is striking that the most enjoyable games tend to involve the least exertion. No doubt some will buy Wii Fit to lose weight, or as an alternative to exercise videos. But I suspect its more virtuous uses will merely be an excuse, for many people, to buy an excellent set of party games.

Wii Fit is on sale now, if it's not sold out £69.99

ILLUSTRATION ALLAN SANDERS

FAIR

RITES OF SUMMER

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S CELEBRATION—SHAKESPEARE'S "DREAM", AS ENACTED BY THE FESTIVAL SEASON'S QUIRKIEST PLAYERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: ARTHUR [illegible] EASHION EDITOR: MARY [illegible] WORDS: [illegible] ST GERMANS

CAST LIST

FESTIVAL FOLK

OBERON ~ *Gemma Banks*
Singer with the rock band Sister (myspace.com/sistermusic). Playing at Secret Garden Party and Standon Calling

PUCK ~ *Ian Bruce*
Portrait painter and MC of swing/hip-hop fusion band the Correspondents (myspace.com/thecorrespondentsmusic). Playing at Glastonbury, Shambala and Lovebox

NICK BOTTOM ~ *Russell Kane*
Comedian (myspace.com/russell_kane). Performing at Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Latitude

STARVELING THE TAILOR ~ *Henry Holland*
Contemporary dressmaker. Festival fan, known for his outlandish rebukes to fashion

SNUG THE JOINER ~ *Joe Rush*
Sculptor of "scrap-pile art" (myspace/mutoidwasteco). His installations can be seen at Glastonbury, Burning Man and Fuji Rock

THE AUDIENCE ~ *Ruby Blues*
Neo-burlesque performer and frontwoman of the electro band Hooligan Night (myspace.com/rubyblues). Performing at Glastonbury, Burning Man and Fuji Rock
~ *Sarah Owen and Ruby Platts-Mills*
Writers and performers with the acting troupe Portobello Panto. Performing at Edinburgh Festival Fringe and House of Fairy Tales, Sudeley Castle

THE MUSICIANS ~ *The Dulwich Ukulele Club*
Eight-strong, south London ukulele band. Playing at Camberwell Arts Festival, Camp Bestival and Surfstock

OTHER FOLK

TITANIA ~ *Ekaterina Kashyntseva*
DEMETRIUS ~ *Will Westall*
LYSANDER ~ *Luke Worrall*
HERMIA ~ *Alina Selyaeva*
HELENA ~ *Helena Magone*
FAIRIES ~ *Dancers with the English National Ballet*

With thanks to Martin Miller of Glencot House Hotel, Somerset (www.glencothouse.co.uk)

EVERYONE LIKES TO get out of it once in a while: to be in a place where the Lord of Misrule rules. The conventions and inhibitions of normal society do not apply during festival time. Inhibitions are broken down. There is no liaison like a festival liaison. Whether it happens under the stars or under the stage, midsummer madness can take hold of us all.

The ancients believed that, according to Democritus, "a life without festival is a long road without an inn". The celebration of "Midsomer Eve" is the oldest summer festival in the northern hemisphere, inextricably linked to the summer solstice when the sun is at its apogee. People believed that plants consumed or planted on that night had miraculous powers—like the purple flower whose juice Puck uses as a love-potion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Many centuries later you don't have to wait for the solstice, but can festival all summer long. Womad. Wakestock. Green Man. The Big Chill. Hay. V. Pagan celebrations on sacred sites have given way to temporary temples to rock'n'roll and culture. This June alone, the British festival calendar has over 50 entries. We may have lost sight of the significance of the changing seasons, but the instinct that drives us to gather together and party is unchanged. "I think there is something quite basic that festivals tap into," says Emily Eavis, the daughter of Glastonbury's founder, Michael. "It's hard to say what, but it's almost medieval. A bit like Brigadoon, I suppose…if you leave, it will disappear into the mist and the enchantment will be broken."

From my own experience of running a festival—the Port Eliot Lit Fest in Cornwall—of turning green fields into a small city for the weekend, I know that if you and your crew get it right, those green fields become Elysian ones, a place where people leave their normal selves at the gates, and turn into anything they like. The more extreme their dress and antics, the more contributory they become, adding to everyone else's amusement and pleasure.

At the Lit Fest, fashion has always been a part of the revels. By which I do not mean high fashion—wearing a spangly mini with your Parka because Kate Moss does—but proper dressing up. Fancy dressing, if you like. It is widely accepted, which makes everyone feel very comfortable. I have come across an impromptu masked ball in the maze at midnight, revellers dressed in feathers and lace. One year, a band called Prada-Meinhof Gang wafted through the woods dressed as white nymphs. Barbara Hulanicki created clothes for the first time since her Biba days. And Bay Garnett and Kira Jolliffe of Cheap Date ran a Pin Up tent, which, all weekend, was filled with a heady mix of exhibitionists (and quite a few male novelists) picking a costume, posing and preening. But that's the thing about a festival site—in the right circumstances, it can become a field of dreams. ~ CStG

"FAIRIES, AWAY!
WE SHALL CHIDE DOWNRIGHT,
IF I LONGER STAY"

(PREVIOUS PAGE) Titania holds court in a peacock headpiece by Philip Treacy and an Alexander McQueen feathered gown. Her fairies' faces are masked by Noel Stewart's wisps of crinoline (to order)

PRODUCTION ~ PICNIC PRODUCTIONS SET DESIGN ~ PAUL DRUMMOND HAIR ~ TOMO JIDAI MAKE-UP ~ GEORGINA GRAHAM MODEL CASTING ~ ROSIE FOGEL FASHION ASSISTANTS ~ ELIN EVANS, TATIANA HAMILL, LUCY CROWTHER AND ADELAIDE TURNBULL

"MY GENTLE PUCK, COME HITHER... FETCH ME THAT FLOWER; THE HERB I SHEW'D THEE ONCE"

An androgynous Oberon (FAR LEFT), in a blend of masculine tailoring and feminine satin, wears shirt, check skirt and shorts, all by Alexander McQueen, black ankle boots by Gina, Wolford's black satin opaque tights, and black satin gloves from Glovepud. A flash of animal spots and stripes give Puck (LEFT) a primitive twist, with a belt from Christian Dior, YSL's cream shoes, and wool fringing from V.V. Rouleaux. The fairies wear draped doublets by Vivienne Westwood and pastel tights by Jonathan Aston.

ALL OTHER COSTUME, ON THIS PAGE AND THROUGHOUT, TO HIRE FROM THE ROYAL NATIONAL THEATRE. TEL: +44 (0)20 7735 4774

[illegible]
FOR OUR REHEARSAL
THIS GREEN [illegible] BE OUR STAGE,
[illegible]

THE ACTORS:
Snug (FAR LEFT) wears Emporio Armani's striped jacket. Starveling (CENTRE) wears Gareth Pugh's black fringe sweater (to order) and House of Holland jeans. Bottom (RIGHT) wears costume to hire, as before

THE AUDIENCE:
Ruby Platts-Mills (LEFT) wears Gary Harvey's trenchcoat ballgown (to order) and Dior's zebra bowler hat. Ruby Blues (CENTRE) wears fringe boots by Gina and Philip Treacy's red "bearskin" (to order). Sarah Owen (RIGHT) wears Alexander McQueen's rainbow gown, Benoit Missolin's red cap, and Terry de Havilland's violet ankle boots

THE MUSICIANS:
The women wear striped jackets by Chanel, [illegible] Gray, Benoit Missolin hats, Emilio Cavallini tights, and crystal shoes by Gina. The men wear (LEFT) Alexis Mabille's check trousers, Jean-Paul Gaultier shirt, and a satin blazer from TSL; (RIGHT) purple suit and [illegible] shirt by Tom Baker (both to order), and TSL shoes
[illegible] HUNTER [illegible] ALL OTHER COSTUME TO HIRE, AS BEFORE

"THOU SEE'ST THESE LOVERS SEEK A PLACE TO FIGHT"

Lysander (ABOVE RIGHT) wears emerald jacket by Tom Baker (to order), paint-splashed trousers from YSL, Levi's T-shirt and Mihara shoes. Hermia (CENTRE RIGHT) wears Giles Deacon's leaf dress and Philip Treacy's synthetic pink headdress (both to order), plus Benoit Missolin's black tulle pom-pom, cream tulle puff hat by Louis Vuitton, gloves from Glovedup, Miu Miu shoes, and spotted tights by Jonathan Aston. Helena (FAR LEFT) wears metallic geometric-cut dress from Alexander McQueen, button-encrusted bow headpiece and metallic shoes by Paule Ka, and tulle gloves from Glovedup. Demetrius (ABOVE CENTRE) wears Jean-Pierre Braganza's black suit, T-shirt by Vivienne Westwood, Hudson shoes, and Benoit Missolin's wicker horns

ALL OTHER COSTUME TO HIRE, AS BEFORE

STYLISTS: ALEXANDER MCQUEEN WWW.ALEXANDERMCQUEEN.COM; ALEXANDRE VAUTHIER WWW.ALEXANDREVAUTHIER.COM; BENOIT MISSOLIN WWW.BENOITMISSOLIN.COM; CHRISTIAN DIOR WWW.DIOR.COM; CHANEL WWW.CHANEL.COM; CHRISTIAN DIOR WWW.DIOR.COM; DOLCE & GABBANA WWW.DOLCEGABBANA.COM; EMILIO CAVALLINI WWW.CAVALLINI.COM; EMPORIO ARMANI WWW.EMPORIOARMANI.COM; GARETH PUGH WWW.GARETHPUGH.COM; GIVENCHY WWW.GIVENCHY.COM; GLOVEDUP WWW.GLOVEDUP.COM; HOUSE OF HOLLAND WWW.HOUSEOFHOLLAND.CO.UK; HUDSON SHOES WWW.HUDSONSHOES.COM; HUNTER WWW.HUNTERBOOTS.COM; JAMES LONG WWW.JAMESLONG.COM; JEAN PAUL GAULTIER WWW.JEANPAULGAULTIER.COM; JEAN-PIERRE BRAGANZA

TO YOUR EYE,
GENTLE LOVER, REMEDY"

Puck (RIGHT) wears YSL's star[illegible] gilet, stripey knickerbockers [illegible] Emporio Armani, and [illegible] Philip Treacy. Hermia (BOTTOM [illegible]) twinkles in Louis Vuitton's indigo [illegible] and white T-shirt. Emilia Cavallin[illegible] and gold brogues by Sergio [illegible] (BOTTOM LEFT) wears [illegible] shirt and checked trous[illegible] and star necklace [illegible] (CENTRE LEFT) wears [illegible] trousers by Prada. [illegible] [illegible] bar[illegible]quin tights, [illegible] gold platform [illegible] to order [illegible]

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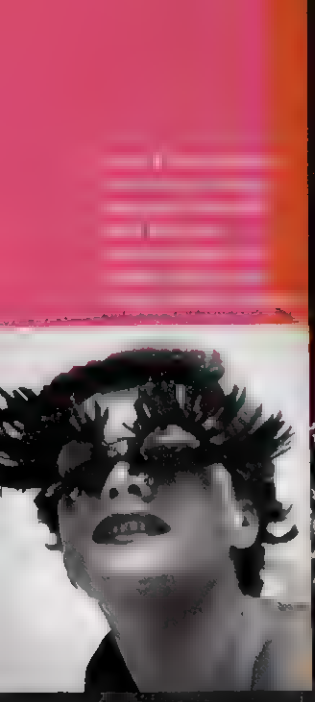
THE NEXT THING THEY SHE WAKING LOOKS UPON—
BE IT ON LION, BEAR, OR WOLF, OR BULL,
ON MEDDLING MONKEY, OR ON BUSY APE—
THE SHALL PURSUE IT WITH THE SOUL OF LOVE

Titania wears Dolce & Gabbana's impressionist painted tulle ballgown (to order) and lashings of moss. Bottom wears costume, to hire as before

GO ON I DARE YOU

There's a time to wear a navy suit and white blouse. And there's a time to wear a tulle puffball skirt with black bondage straps. **Judith Watt** explains why we can all afford to let a little bad taste into our wardrobes



real values of the spirit: taste itself, for instance." Despite this, the Spanish designer Cristobal Balenciaga, a contemporary of Chanel's, said that Coco had very little taste—but all of it was good. Meanwhile Schiaparelli—whom he described as "the only true artist in couture"—had "lots of taste", but it was "all bad".

Some of the most influential clothes-wearers—as opposed to clothes-makers—tended to have that same witty ability to play with notions of taste. The beautiful Phyllis Boyd, descended from William IV and his mistress Mrs Jordan, is scarcely remembered today, but in the 1920s—when she married into French aristocracy, and became the muse of Jean Patou—she was known as the best dressed woman in France. Boyd was the first Western woman in centuries to wear short skirts that revealed the legs, and the first to wear long-waisted jumpers; she would put a baby's cap over her shingled hair, and stepped out in red shoes with impossibly high heels and straps around her ankles that looked like bracelets. To all of this she would add a touch of something cheap—what we would call "kitsch"—from Woolworths or a street market, just in case she looked too oppressively well-dressed.

At about the same time, Daisy Fellowes, heiress to the Singer sewing-machine fortune and Schiaparelli's most favoured client, would wear simple linen dresses to dinner, while everyone else tried to outshine each other in the latest mode. Like Chanel, Fellowes eschewed the vulgarity of her many impressive sets of matching jewellery, opting instead for a necklace made from champagne corks, or getting her emeralds ground down by the jeweller so they could be worn like cheap glass beads; "she would appear", said Schiaparelli, "wearing the oddest monstrosity just to annoy everybody and show she was not dependent on dictated taste." In a similar vein, the society beauty Lady Diana Cooper would top off an outfit with a set of imitation gold bangles, while the heiress and innovator Millicent Rogers, a great patron of the American designer Charles James, would downplay this maestro's work by wearing it with "barbaric" Navajo jewellery.

What of now? Plenty of other labels have joined Comme's exploration of the border country between subversive originality and out-and-out vulgarity. Prada's autumn-winter collection completely reinvented lace, turning it from frothy knicker-trim into cool-eyed, hard-edged outerwear, while the London-based designer Erdem Moraglioglu showed sweeping skirts of double duchesse satin printed with clashing florals, and covered the bodice of an empire-line dress

FAR LEFT Anna Piaggi, of Italian Vogue, and, inset, the British model Agyness Deyn, both renowned for their bold style RIGHT A Rei Kawakubo coat for Comme des Garçons AW08

HOW TO WEAR IT: BAD TASTE

Revel in the unexpected, don't take yourself too seriously, but always, always maintain an elegant line—the late Isabella Blow, Anna Piaggi and my own ancestor Daisy Fellowes are all entertaining examples of how to wear the opposite of what would be considered "right". Take them as inspiration, but don't pile it all on at once—you can have too much of a good (bad) thing.

Metalheads You can wear sequins during the day—ideally a bolero or drop-waisted dress from the 1920s—as long as they are old and tarnished-looking, and are dressed down with plimsolls. Or layer mixed gold chains over slim, monochrome tailoring, as at Givenchy.

Second skin Wolford's high-gloss Satin De Luxe black tights make even very short skirts more wearable, as well as elongating the legs.

See spots Invest in a pair of leopard-print or glitter shoes, but only in the most modern, clean shapes—Gina (*below*) and Miu Miu both excel at this. Wear them with pieces that are structured or tailored, never with anything too vampish or girly. And if you are over 20, don't buy vintage shoes—they instantly date an outfit.

Uniform Wear one loud colour, such as violet, top-to-toe for evening—as seen at Christian Dior and Moschino—but then balance it with bare legs and arms.

Lanvin's way Taking inspiration from Alber Elbaz, pile layers of paste and pearl necklaces and brooches on top of anything plain or sporty—even a T-shirt, tank top or jeans. More playful still are Sonia Rykiel's "jewels", concocted from diamanté and coloured plastic.

Cheap laughs Have some fun—express your sense of humour with glittery, flower-motif hairclips, skull-print flip flops, or comical plastic rings from market stalls. But try to wear them with precious fabrics such as silk, satin and cashmere. ~ MARY FELLOWES

DRESS SENSE

Sunglasses

Monica Chong, the creative director of Cutler and Gross, on life through a lens

Why do sunglasses matter?
Because they are really your main accessory. Shoes or handbags are fine, but honestly, people look at your face first. So sunglasses give everyone a bit of instant glamour

Sunglasses, shades, or sunnies?
It depends who I'm talking to. "Sunglasses" is the correct term—but sometimes when it's just girlies together I say "sunnies". Calling them "shades" is rock 'n' roll—but we like rock 'n' roll.

What should they be made of?
Acetate: it's light, long-lasting and very, very versatile. You can laminate it, you can print on to it...I've even developed a pair of "pinstripe glasses"—like in a pinstripe fabric but printed—that's been very successful; the boys love them. Titanium is good, too, very light. The lightest, most expensive material of all is buffalo horn, which you heat-compress in layers: it's the cashmere of the eyewear world. The colours are fabulous, from a kind of honey to chocolate brown, and look even better as they age. You won't find that with plastic.

Must lenses always be black?
Actually there is no such thing as black lenses—if they were black you wouldn't be able to see anything. No, lenses are usually a dark or graduated grey. But coloured lenses can be fun: a little coloured tinge might be quite cute, you know. And also lenses are changeable: if you're fed up with a graduated grey there's nothing to stop you saying: "You know what, I want graduated fuschia this month."

Is there anywhere you shouldn't wear sunglasses?
Not in a nightclub—it looks really stupid. I've seen it so many times and actually I feel like walking up to the people wearing them and saying "Do you mind *not*?"

What about musicians on stage?
That is cool; that is perfect. It's pure attitude. "I'm up here, I've got my mask on, so there." They're a posey thing, sunglasses—you know that

Describe the first pair of sunglasses you ever bought.
It was back in my college days. They were vintage 1950s, with pink cat-eye frames—probably hideous, but I thought I looked really good walking around in them. Right now I wear another vintage pair, quite dark, black butterflies with yellow arms. They're big; I like their drama.

Who would you nominate as the ambassador of shades?
Audrey Hepburn. Absolutely no one wore them better than her She had that perfect-shaped face, so she could wear them really, really big. Just think of "Breakfast at Tiffany's". Oh my God—how fabulous is that?

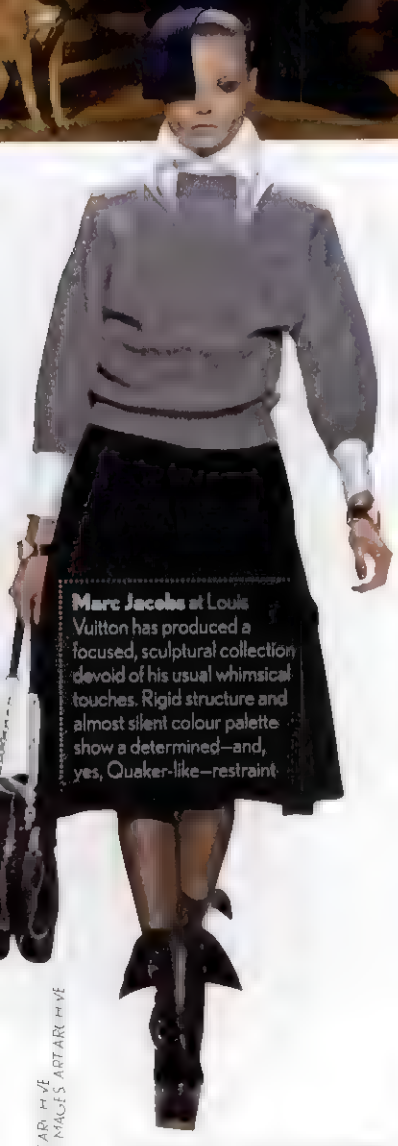
NEWSPRINTS NEWSPAPERS TO FROM ... TRANSPARENCY ON

"If we should Dress ourselves Plain, People would gaze at us, call us Quakers, and make us the Subject of their Discourse and Town-talk"

THE COUNTESS OF KILDARE, AS QUOTED IN THE "JOURNAL OF THE LIFE OF THOMAS STORY", A 17TH-CENTURY AMERICAN QUAKER

Hard, sober and calculating, **Prada**'s AW08 collection coolly denies any explicit sex appeal (*left*). Nevertheless it is still hugely appealing in its cerebral glamour and Quakerish simplicity. Meanwhile **Akris** (*below centre*) is typically pared down, while maintaining an innate intelligence

Roberto Cavalli—never usually one to go anywhere near strictness or sobriety—pulls in the reins a bit tighter for this collection, polishing up the Quaker aesthetic with drop-waisted, full-skirted, black dresses in glossy evening fabrics (*above right*)



Marc Jacobs at Louis Vuitton has produced a focused, sculptural collection devoid of his usual whimsical touches. Rigid structure and almost silent colour palette show a determined—and, yes, Quaker-like—restraint

WITH **FRIENDS** LIKE THESE

The quiet simplicity of Quaker costume can be read in two ways: first, sexlessness and classlessness; second, a spirited sexuality boiling beneath all those flat, repressive surfaces. Either way, there is no doubting its influence on the coming Autumn/Winter collections. Pieces such as Giambattista Valli's voluminous black jacket (*below*) or Akris's charcoal, floor-sweeping coat (*above right*) are worth investing in—like nearly all designs that last, they have chic clean lines on the body, easily updated with directional, bold accessories. The key is to make the silhouette modern rather than conservative, adding a touch of volume or something oversize: a large-brimmed black hat worn over a short dress looks strong but well-balanced, for example. Or even add some plumage (a headdress, perhaps, or a piece of feathered jewellery) taking inspiration from the delicate, grey-bibbed markings of the aptly named Quaker Parakeet. ~ MARY FELLOWES

Richard Nicoll gives the most overt—and certainly the most glamorous—nod to the Friends, using the classic Quaker hat to accessorise both long coats and this tuxedo tied with a giant bow

Giambattista Valli is always recognisable for his experiments with volume. Here, inky day- and evening-wear is intense, fierce and pared down. A cocooning black silhouette (*right*)—combined on the catwalk with scrubbed faces and clean side-partings—instantly evokes the classic Quaker woman

TOPHAM BRIDGEMAN ART ARCHIVE
CATWALKING.COM GETTY IMAGES ART ARCHIVE

GLOBAL TRADING *Apothecaries*

Five stores to make you feel (and look) better

PATYKA PARIS

This tiny, gem-like boutique (*right*), a stone's throw from the Pompidou Centre, is a rarity in a city dominated by big-name beauty brands. Everything from its geranium-scented body cream to a luxurious night-repair elixir is created using organic plant extracts and whipped up in Patyka's eco-labs in Lyon, without including even a hint of silicone, petroleum or harmful synthetics. ~ SARAH DALLAS

14 rue Rambuteau, 75003 Paris; www.patyka.com. Tel: +33 (0)1 40 29 49 49

MARIE MASON LOS ANGELES

Marie Mason's blue-and-cream boutique (*right*) inspires feverish devotion from her Santa Monica clientele, not least for its "fragrance bar" where customised perfumes and body lotions are prepared from a choice of 100 different scents. Expect a tempting mix of local mainstays (look out for Kate Somerville's skin creams) and lesser-known products, such as Diana B's black-fig body scrub. ~ SARA WILSON

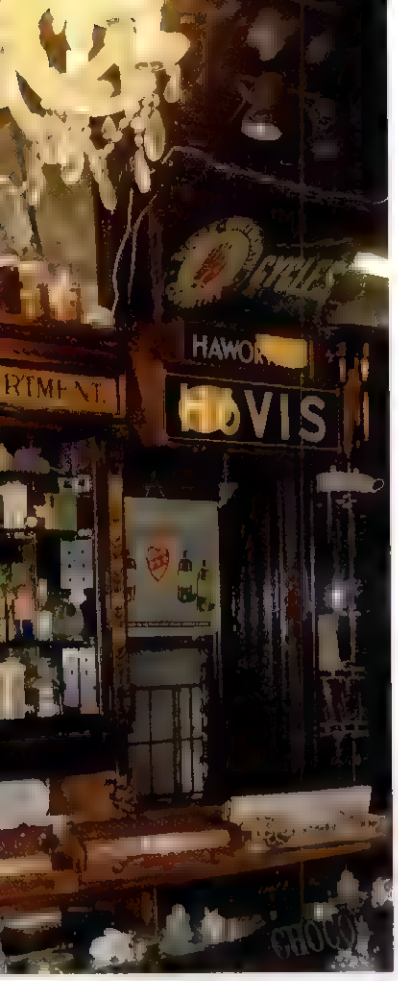
225 26th St, Brentwood, Santa Monica, CA; www.mariemasonapothecary.com. Tel: +1 (310) 394 5710

BERBER PHARMACIES MARRAKECH

Dotted throughout the noisy souks of Marrakech are these havens of calm, lined with bright jars of coloured powders and liquids, which, according to the pharmacy frontmen, will cure just about any complaint you can name—just add a dose of faith. The all-natural beauty products include a dye made of crushed poppies—the perfect red lipstain—and Moroccan rosewater, a delicious, pungent toner. Back home, multi-coloured, crocheted loofhas (*left*) make striking accessories stacked in a big glass bowl. ~ MARY FELLOWES

Various locations within the souks north of Jemaa El Fna square, Marrakech

GERARD LEE / ALAMY



ROSE & CO YORKSHIRE

Branwell Brontë and his opium habit may be long gone, but Haworth's village druggists (*left*), nigh on the wuthering moors, remains. Since 1987 it has been home to Caroline Rose's range of "ointments and embrocations", all made to original recipes tested on the premises, and sold in traditionally styled tin and glass packaging. Carry home a pot of Rose Petal Salve, soothing enough to take the edges off even the roughest Heathcliff. ~ ISABEL LLOYD

84 Main Street, Haworth, West Yorkshire; www.rose-apothecary.co.uk. Tel: +44 (0)1535 646830

C.O. BIGELOW NEW YORK

In a relentlessly changing city, this 168-year-old, family-run apothecary (*above*)—the 19th-century forebear of a chain of stores that started here, in Manhattan's West Village—boasts an atmosphere charming enough to make Norman Rockwell blush. Its wooden shelves are filled with natural remedies, a city-sized range of eclectic beauty products and Bigelow's own line of treatments: the signature lip balm is a bestseller. ~ EMILY BOBROW

414 Avenue of the Americas, NY 10011; www.bigelowchemists.com. Tel: +1 (212) 533 2700

INSIDER TRADING

Barbecues

Andy Annat, butcher and British barbecue champion, on choosing equipment for alfresco cooking

What you really want is a barbecue with a lid. Not to keep the rain off, but for what we call "off-set" or "indirect" cooking, where you push the charcoal over to one side, put the food above the charcoal-free area, and then close the lid, making a kind of oven. This way you're not just restricted to sausages: in a lidded, 57cm-diameter kettle-type barbecue you can cook anything from the Sunday roast to pizza or bread-and-butter pudding.

Should you use gas or charcoal? It's your choice, really. Charcoal is arguably more macho: it's "real", it burns hotter, and it gives that distinctive smoky flavour. But it's slow to start, you'll get flare-ups—when dripping fat catches fire on the coals below, singeing the food—and there'll be ashes to dispose of. A separate ash pan helps, plus it'll stop ash choking the charcoal as it burns.

Gas barbecues are more expensive, but do give rapid, consistent, controllable heat—and as long as they have more than two burners, will do off-set cooking. To stop flare-ups, the burners will be covered with either lava rocks, ceramic briquettes or V-shaped metal "flavouriser" bars—the latter tend to be the most effective, though cast-iron or stainless-steel ones last longer than the ceramic-coated type.

Choose a model that is stable, a comfortable height, and the right size for your catering ambitions—too big a cooking space and you'll waste fuel. Enamel-coated steel lasts years longer than painted steel, which will soon peel and rust; but whatever it's made of, it must have a good, sturdy grate of heavy-gauge metal to hold the heat and sear the meat.

Don't get too distracted by accessories. A warming tray in the lid and a decent manufacturer's warranty are probably the only extras you'll need. The one accessory you must never, ever use is a fork—it'll pierce the meat and let all the lovely juices drain away.

INTERVIEW BY JANE YETTRAM

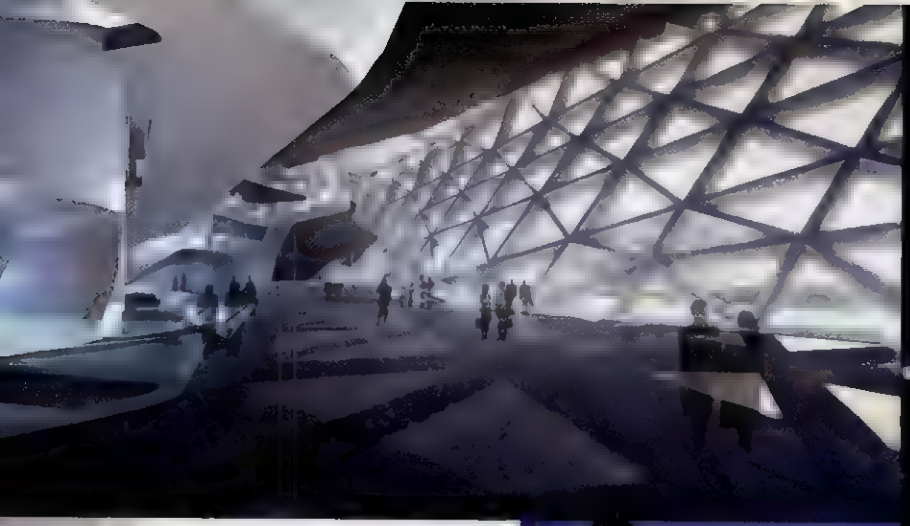
WHERE TO BUY

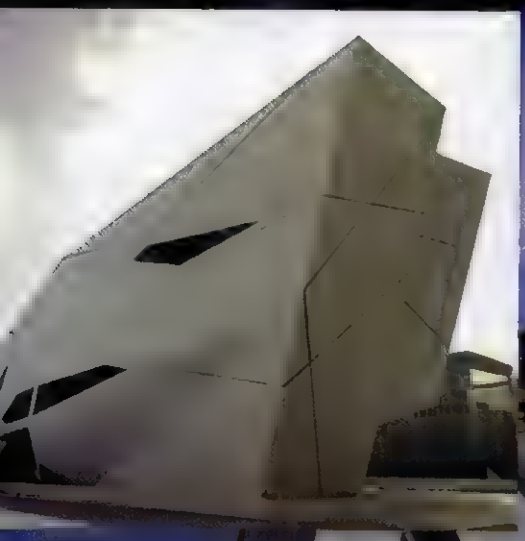
Barbecue World Cambridge St, Godmanchester, Cambs; www.barbecue-world.co.uk. Tel: +44 (0)1480 417624

Giardino Schlosserstrasse 33, Lindlar, Germany; www.holz-richter.de. Tel: +49 (0)2266 4735 830

Hayes Garden World Lake Rd, Ambleside, Cumbria; www.hayesgardenworld.co.uk. Tel: +44 (0)1539 433434

Mode France Mail-order only; www.mode-france.com. Tel: +33 (0)5 63 95 36 33





"What is exciting," says Zaha, "is the link between computing and fabrication. The computer doesn't do the work. There is a similar thing to doing it by hand…"

"The computer is a tool," I agree.

"No. No, it's not…"

What then?

The workers on the factory floor—my way of putting it, not hers—are, she says "connected by digital knowledge…They have very different interests from 20 years ago."

Sure. But this does not make immediate sense. It is a matter to return to, that will become clear(ish) in time.

TEN MINUTES' WALK from the practice is Hadid's apartment—austerely elegant, a sort of gallery of her painting and spectacularly lissom furniture. It's a monument to Zaha the public architect rather than Zaha the private woman. It occupies a chunk of an otherwise forgettable block. Her route from home to work might almost have been confected as an illustration of the abruptness of urban mutation. Here is ur-London: stock bricks and red terracotta, pompous warehouses, run-down factories, Victorian philanthropists' prison-like tenements, grim toytown cottages, high mute walls, a labyrinth of alleys, off-the-peg late-Georgian terraces, neglected pockets of mid-20th-century Utopianism, apologetic infills, ambiguous plots of wasteground. It is neither rough nor pretty, but it has sinewy character. It may be ordinary, but it is undeniably diverse. The daily stroll through this canyon of variety is surely attractive to an artist whose aesthetic is doggedly catholic, each of whose buildings seems unsatisfied with being just one building.

If Zaha is offended by the suggestion that constant exposure to such a typical part of London might, however indirectly, impinge on her work, she doesn't show it. But she is faintly bemused. It is as though such a possibility had never occurred to her. This is absolutely not the sort of proposition that gets mooted in the world of Big Time Architecture which Hadid has inhabited all her adult life (she is 57), for many years as a perpetually promising aspirant, a "paper architect" who got very little built but still won the Pritzker prize—the Nobel of architecture—which raises the questions of whether architecture is divisible from building, of where the fiction of design stops and the actuality of structure starts. Today she is this tiny, powerful milieu's most singular star, and its only woman, its only Zaha.

So distinctive a name is useful. It's a fortuity which might just grant her effortless entry to the glitzy cadre of the mononomial: Elvis, Arletty, Sting. The first architect to be so blessed since Mies (van der Rohe).

Architecture is the most public of endeavours, yet it is a smugly hermetic world. Architects, architectural critics and theorists, and the architectural press (which is little more than a deferential PR machine) are cosily conjoined by an ingrown, verruca-like jargon which derives from the cretinous end of American academe: "Emerging from the now-concluding work on single-surface organisations, animated form, data-scapes, and box-in-box organisations are investigations into the critical consequences of complex vector networks of movement and specularity…"

They're only talking about buildings. This is the cant of pseudo-science—self-referential, inelegant, obfuscatingly exclusive: it attempts to elevate architecture yet makes a mockery of it. Zaha, however, has the chutzpah to defend it. She claims to be not much of a reader of anything other than magazines, so the coarseness of the prose doesn't offend her. The point she makes is that this is the lingua franca of intercontinental architecture. A sort of Esperantist pidgin propagated by the world's major architectural schools—the majority of which happen to be notionally anglophone, yet whose pupils and teachers come from a host of countries—and the world's major architectural practices which are international and polyglot. When Zaha talks about architecture, about urbanism, about the continuing exemplary importance of the Architectural Association (AA) in London, where she studied after a childhood in Baghdad, boarding school in England and university in Beirut (reading maths), she uses this pidgin, and studs it with syntactical mishaps.

Zaha Hadid, near her flat
London April 2008

ZAHA HAD DARK HAIR, THE BINDI AND NOT SO MUCH BOTOX. OMAR ROLANDHA BE PORTRAIT **STEVE DOUBLE**

Concrete and unconcrete

Plans for the foyer of the new Guangzhou Opera House, forthcoming
BMW plant Central Building, Leipzig, 2005
Regium Waterfront, Reggio Calabria, forthcoming
The Opus, Dubai, forthcoming
Spittelau Viaducts housing project, Vienna, 2005
New library building at the University of Seville, forthcoming
Rosenthal Centre for Contemporary Art, Cincinnati, 2003

> "You know, space is an interesting endeavour…you create an interesting…the impact you have on the cityscape. The whole life of a city can be in single block…Break the block, yeh? Make it porous…Organisational patterns which imply a new geometry…The idea of extrusion…One thing always critical was idea of ground, how to carve the ground, layering, fragmentation…" Perhaps being "connected by digital knowledge" is just a way of circumventing the problems inherent in a polyglot workforce, given that verbal expression plays only a minor part in architectural creation. The gulf between clumsy, approximate jargon and precise, virtuoso design is chasmic. And it has some important ramifications. Despite its practitioners' fastidious, perhaps delusional protests that it is a creative and scientific endeavour, architecture is a very big business, one that is involved in the creation and sale of one-off objects: it is a trade dealing mostly in the bespoke.

Now, one consequence of being "connected by digital knowledge" is an enforced internationalism—at the highest tier. So take, for example, the Basque provinces where Santiago Calatrava has built Bilbao's airport, where Frank Gehry has famously built a Guggenheim Museum, where Rafael Moneo has built the (better) Kursaal at San Sebastian, and where Zaha has no fewer than three projects: a new quarter of Bilbao; a sleek, partially buried railway station in Durango, and government offices in Vitoria.

This region, whose paranoiac sense of itself and of its blood-drenched individuality need hardly be emphasised, is becoming a testing ground for exercises in a globalised aesthetic entirely at odds with its vernacular idioms of distended chalets and Hausmanian pomp. Zaha is enthusiastic about this sort of dissonance. She is opposed to new buildings which nod allusively—she would say deferentially—to their ancient neighbours. She regards such buildings as sops to populism.

"It would be interesting to do a large project without looking backwards."

"How large? "

She grins. "A city. A city! Without looking backwards. Vernacular building… it's like minimalism." (I take it that she means neo-vernacular building.) "People can handle minimalism, vernacular. It doesn't disturb them."

Hadidopolis, the dreamed city, would, paradoxically, be less disturbing, less astonishing than a single building by her in an already established environment where the clash of idioms is potentially deafening.

"They still talk about contextual. Ha!"

"They" are her bugbear, the (now rather old) New Urbanists, the begetters of crass, kitschy, retro-developments such as Seaside and Disney's Celebration, both of them in Florida. Her distaste for their twee, anti-modernist escapism is total.

In Zaha's lexicon, contextual might be synonymous with compromised, which is the last word that could be applied to her own work. Bloody-minded, unaccommodating, serious, joyful, emotionally expressive, intellectually engaging: these are more apt. Yet, no matter what she says, each of her buildings is sensitive to its context. Being sensitive does not mean being passive. It is not a question of taking a cue from the immediate surroundings, but of making an appropriate intervention that changes those surroundings, which creates a new place and better space. She has 25 projects either completed or under construction, and even the most cursory scrutiny of them reveals an exceptional

ESSENTIAL ZAHA

PHAENO SCIENCE CENTRE, WOLFSBURG, LOWER SAXONY

Wolfsburg, originally Stadt des KdF-Wagens, is a car town built by the Nazi agency Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through Joy"), whose leader Robert Ley would hang himself with a towel while awaiting trial at Nuremberg. The KdF-Wagen is known today as the Volkswagen. Its factory employs almost half the population. The town has "rebranded" itself by commissioning a series of audacious buildings devoted to transport and science. Zaha Hadid's Phaeno is a sort of educative funfair, a pedagogically correct hall of smoke and mirrors. It is a tour de force of subtly exaggerated and constantly mutating shapes and spaces that imply speed. At times it seems like a cave, at others like a vastly distended piece of lab equipment—a combination that suggests the benificent, sheltering effects of scientific achievement. And although the surroundings are not beautiful, they are certainly impressive. The building acknowledges this and frames Wolfsburg's best-known feature, the car factory's epic chimneys. ~JM

versatility and a multitude of responses. She has eschewed the temptation to develop the signature that afflicts high-end architects, prompting the accusation that Libeskind or Calatrava or Gehry merely plonk down the same lump of product time and again across the globe. Zaha has style all right, but not a style.

The Rosenthal Centre for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati is blocky, grounded, cubistic; it is unrecognisable as being by the same hand as, say, the Phaeno Science Centre in Wolfsburg, which is taut, dynamic, horizontal and looking to make a quick getaway. The Museum of Transport on the south bank of the Clyde in Glasgow has a silhouette that might be a child's depiction of a city's skyline. Of her cable railway stations in Innsbruck, one is sleek and reptilian, a second fungal, a third a homage to a species of bird that never existed.

Sometimes she seems to be working in steel, other times in butter; here she is chiselling wood, there she is twisting chocolate. A university building on the Barcelona waterfront recalls a poorly shuffled pack of cards. Her winning entry for the new Guggenheim Hermitage Museum in the already architecturally rich city of Vilnius might be an exquisite example of the patissier's art which has melted under a merciless sun. The A55 motorway's descent into Marseille, one of the most thrilling in Europe, will be further enhanced by the headquarters for the CMA-CGM container company, built in the cleft where raised carriageways bifurcate. This 147-metre tower will be the highest in the burgeoning city. It is a perhaps reproachful complement to the effortful wackiness of neighbouring projects, such as Massimiliano Fuksas's Euromed Centre: Zaha's tower is as stately as a duchess's ballgown, and again very different from anything else she has done.

How do she and her collaborators, chief among them Patrik Schumacher, manage to avoid the besetting architectural tic of self-plagiarism?

"Don't draw on computer. Don't draw and then put it onto computer…I have five screens…Different projects…You work on developing, oh, a table while at the same time you're developing masterplans. It's like you have different information coming from different directions. Like photography. Out of focus… then you zoom in. I'll have a sketch—it'll take a few times before it takes. Sometimes a few years. You see, not every idea can be used right then. But nothing is lost. Nothing."

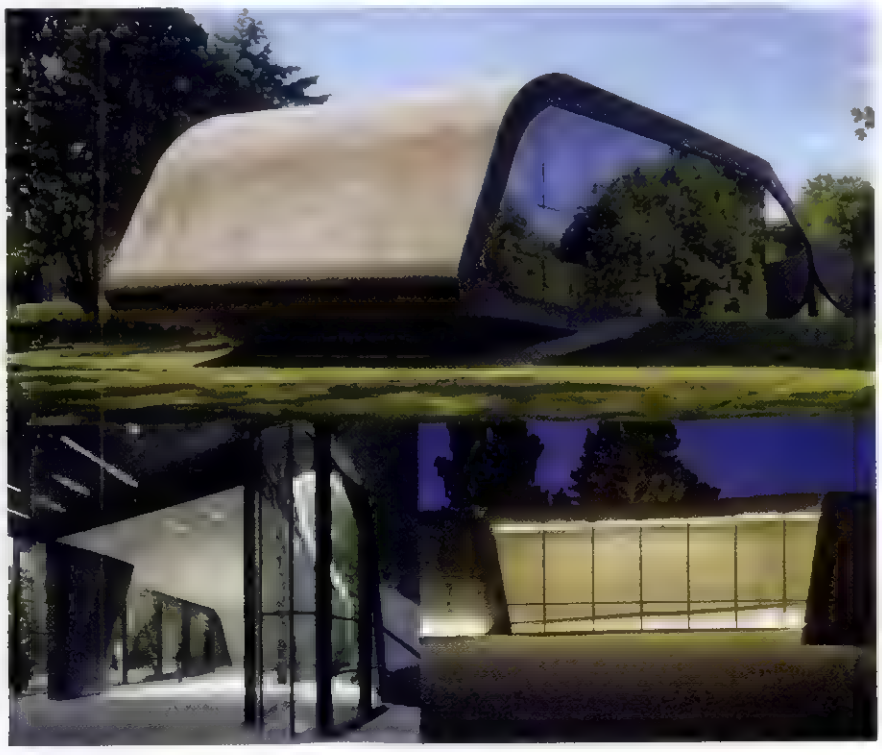
So a shape or form devised initially for a piece of furniture may be fed a course of steroids and become a building?

"No. That's not what I'm saying. Doesn't work like that."

I rather suspect that Zaha has an ancient fear: that to discover how her processes work would be to jeopardise them.

THE IDEA THAT London comprises a series of villages—an estate agent's vulgar conceit—goes lazily unchallenged. Villages are small, hick, inward-looking. London is not. London pioneered sprawl: it was a horse-drawn precursor of Los Angeles. It is a city of stylistic collisions and astonishing juxtapositions. Which might be reckoned to make it susceptible to imaginative and unorthodox architectural interventions. There is, after all, no classical homogeneity to rupture, no defining idiom which must be adhered to.

Yet Zaha Hadid—an architect who is nothing if not imaginative, nothing if not unorthodox, who is feted throughout the world as, ugly word, a starchitect—still does not have a single building to her name in London, despite having lived and worked >



ESSENTIAL ZAHA

ORDRUPGAARD MUSEUM EXTENSION, CHARLOTTENLUND, COPENHAGEN

Ordrupgaard is a large though hardly palatial neo-classical surburban villa. It was built just after the first world war for the businessman Wilhelm Hansen to house a small collection of French post-impressionism and Danish 19th-century realism. Zaha Hadid's extension doubled the size of the galleries. It makes no reference to the original build ng other than to counter its insipid timidity with a gesture that is both deft and powerful. Roofs and walls coalesce. The building appears to be too large for the site and hangs over the edge of a sloping lawn as though it has gone too far, like a sleek coach teetering on a cliff: perhaps the only building in the world that recalls the end of "The Italian Job". Apart from this hint of the abyss, the emphasis is markedly horizontal; from certain points of view the gallery seems like a rocky outcrop. Where the glazing ends, a blank, phenomenally long—you might say deliberately overstretched—wall reaches into the distance. Those with a taste for pyromania as well as for inspired architecture will be relieved to learn that the Museum of Firefighting is nearby. - JM

hidden depths

Ninety per cent of the planet's living space—and biodiversity—is under water. And there are only five manned craft on Earth that can get to the bottom of it. What they find is both terrifying and alluring. J.M. LEDGARD probes the weird world of the submersible

IMAGINE YOU ARE on a beach in Zanzibar, facing the Indian Ocean, and your intent is not to go across, not to paddle, but to go down into the ocean. You walk out under the palm trees, carrying snorkel and flippers. The shore is white sand, it burns the soles of your feet. Several thousand crabs scuttle into tiny holes before you. You wade out into aquamarine waters, soapy, the temperature of blood. At first there is nothing, only patterned sand, then a gathering of kelp, an eel, some milky jellies, a wall of rock with fissures where the sharks sometimes make it through, finally, an opening out onto a coral reef. This is the most munificent garden, you think. A sea garden. There are fronds and tendrils, angel fish, thorny puffer fish inflating in the shadows, rays moving somnolent on the chalky bottom, a luminous purple starfish. Most of all there is light. This is a part of the world you know. The sunshine falls in thick shafts, bending, illuminating the coral. Swim farther out, under the churning surf, and your world falls away.

The waters there are darker and greener, also colder. You are still at the surface, and no matter your intent, your instinct is to stay at the surface, remaining afloat, except perhaps in the sardine season, when the shoals move up from Antarctic waters, and you might swim down a few metres, ten, 20 at the most, to see the dolphins parting the clouds of sardines. Even at 20 metres, the world you know begins to recede. The sun hardens and contracts in the murk, as a pupil contracts in the light. The colours bleach. There is no red. If you cut yourself, your blood will look black. The sea water itself changes, it ceases to be the stuff of sea gardens, but becomes massive, corrosive, anti-human. There is a pressing in at your ears, sinuses and temples. You look down through your mask. There is only liquid obsidian, a bottomless pit, in every folklore the place of the drowned and the damned. Sailors call it Davy Jones's locker. Even oceanographers run out of epithets. They regularly call it the eternal darkness. It is starless, crushing, terrifying, yet alluring. What the hell is down there?

For a start, 91% of the planet's living space and 90% of its biodiversity. The Earth is really the Ocean. "Il faut aller voir," commanded the French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau. "We must go and see."

Going and seeing requires a manned submersible—a tiny craft designed to deal with the tremendous pressures of the deep, pressures so violent that the finest jet of water, entering at depth, can slice a body in two. Submarines can't venture into the deep. They operate at shallow depths: if they go down too far, they implode.

Only rich nations can afford submersibles and even they balk at the cost. There are only five submersibles in the world's fleet capable of diving below 3,000 metres. Among them are Alvin, operated out of the Woods Hole Oceano-

OPPOSITE Released like a yo-yo: the first bathysphere, invented by Otis Barton in 1930

GETTY IMAGES

In many respects, the ocean is more hostile than space. Even with a futurist exoskeleton, the human body is too liquescent to contemplate stepping onto an ocean floor. There will never be a Neil Armstrong moment

graphic Institution in Massachusetts; France's Nautile, named for Jules Verne's Nautilus; the twin Mir I and Mir II submersibles of the Russian Academy in St Petersburg; and Japan's Shinkai, sailing out of Yokosuka. The operating depths of these craft range up to 6,500 metres, 680 atmospheres, putting 96% of the ocean floor within the range of aquanauts. None is capable of matching the feat of Jacques Piccard and Don Walsh, who, in 1960, touched down on the Challenger Deep of the Marianas Trench in the bathyscaphe Trieste—at 10,911 metres the deepest point on our planet.

THE HISTORY OF deep ocean exploration is short. The first forays were made off Bermuda in 1930. An American naturalist, William Beebe, put out a challenge sponsored by the New York Zoological Society for an underwater capsule elegant in its simplicity. A wealthy compatriot, Otis Barton, invented the bathysphere—a steel ball with windows of fused quartz, attached to a surface ship by a cable. In 1932, released like a yo-yo from the barge above, the bathysphere, with Beebe and Barton crammed inside, reached a depth of 923 metres.

Dangling in depths only the drowned had previously plumbed and which no artist or prophet had properly imagined, with all the light of the world blotted out and trays of soda lime absorbing the carbon dioxide they breathed out, the two men had a unique view. "I felt like an infinitesimal atom floating in illimitable space," Beebe later wrote. "I was privileged to peer out and actually see the creatures which had evolved in the blackness of a blue midnight which, since the ocean was born, had known no following day." Beebe later fell out with Barton when the inventor used the bathysphere in a feature film of his own design, "Titans of the Deep", starring sharks and busty girls.

It was France who set man free underwater. During the second world war a French naval officer, Jacques Cousteau, invented scuba—self-contained underwater breathing apparatus. In 1948, a Swiss scientist, Auguste Piccard, reluctantly sold his bathyscaphe—literally, deep boat—to the French navy. Piccard was the model for Professor Calculus in the Tintin comic books. He had worked with Einstein and touched the stratosphere in a pressurised capsule attached to a balloon. He used the same principles in his bathyscaphe: the abyss might be reached by weights and escaped by balloon. There were strange scenes in which a prototype was lowered below the waves off France. Piccard looked out of the viewhole, together with a French professor, as Cousteau's pioneering scuba divers circled outside. The professor was overcome. Hadn't he witnessed this before? Of course. As a boy, he had seen an engraving of the same scene—the captain, the professor, the divers outside—in Jules Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea".

In 1954, two French naval officers, George Houot and Pierre-Henri Willm, made the first dive to abyssal depths, sinking 4,023 metres in the FNRS-3 bathyscaphe, and breaking the surface in the tropical waters off Senegal. "Our craft is a blind, clumsy, limping creature, compared with what is to follow," said Houot. Yet the Senegal dive proved the starting point of manned ocean flight—less celebrated than manned space flight, but no less heroic.

In many respects, the ocean is more hostile than space. Even with a futurist exoskeleton, the human body is too liquescent to contemplate stepping onto an ocean floor. There will never be a Neil Armstrong moment. Space flight is about weightlessness, speed, and the pressure inside the capsule against the airless void outside. Ocean descent is about weight, slowness, tonnes of sea water bearing down, and the discomfiting realisation that humans are alien to most of our own planet. Space offers a sighted journey towards infinity, the ocean a blind journey towards finitude.

When Auguste Piccard parted ways with the French navy, his son Jacques found private investors to build a more advanced bathyscaphe, named Trieste after its backers' home city. After tests in the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Piccards sold the Trieste to the American navy, which immediately saw advantage in sending the craft into the Challenger Deep. Auguste was too old for such a dive, so Jacques descended with Lieutenant Don Walsh, an American naval officer. The men took pictures, confirming that there was life on the abyssal floor, but incredibly the photos were mislabelled and lost in the naval archives.

Bertrand Piccard, grandson of Auguste and son of Jacques, hopes that one day the missing photographs will be recovered. Bertrand, who is following the family tradition of exploration by seeking to become the first person to fly around the world on solar flight, recalls attending a screening of the film "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" with his father Jacques. "I was only seven, but I vividly remember looking up at Captain Nemo on the screen and then looking at my father next to me and thinking, I have my own Captain Nemo."

Verne's masterpiece remains the childhood inspiration for many oceanographers, but it is striking how hospitable a picture of the deep it painted. Nemo, an Indian embittered by the Sepoy mutiny, sails the Nautilus effortlessly into the abyssal depths. There is no eternal darkness. It might as well have been a fish bowl. "Let the reader imagine a forest

in the Hartz mountains, with trees clinging on the slopes of the steep mountains, but completely immersed in water," is Verne's description of an underwater hike to sunken Atlantis.

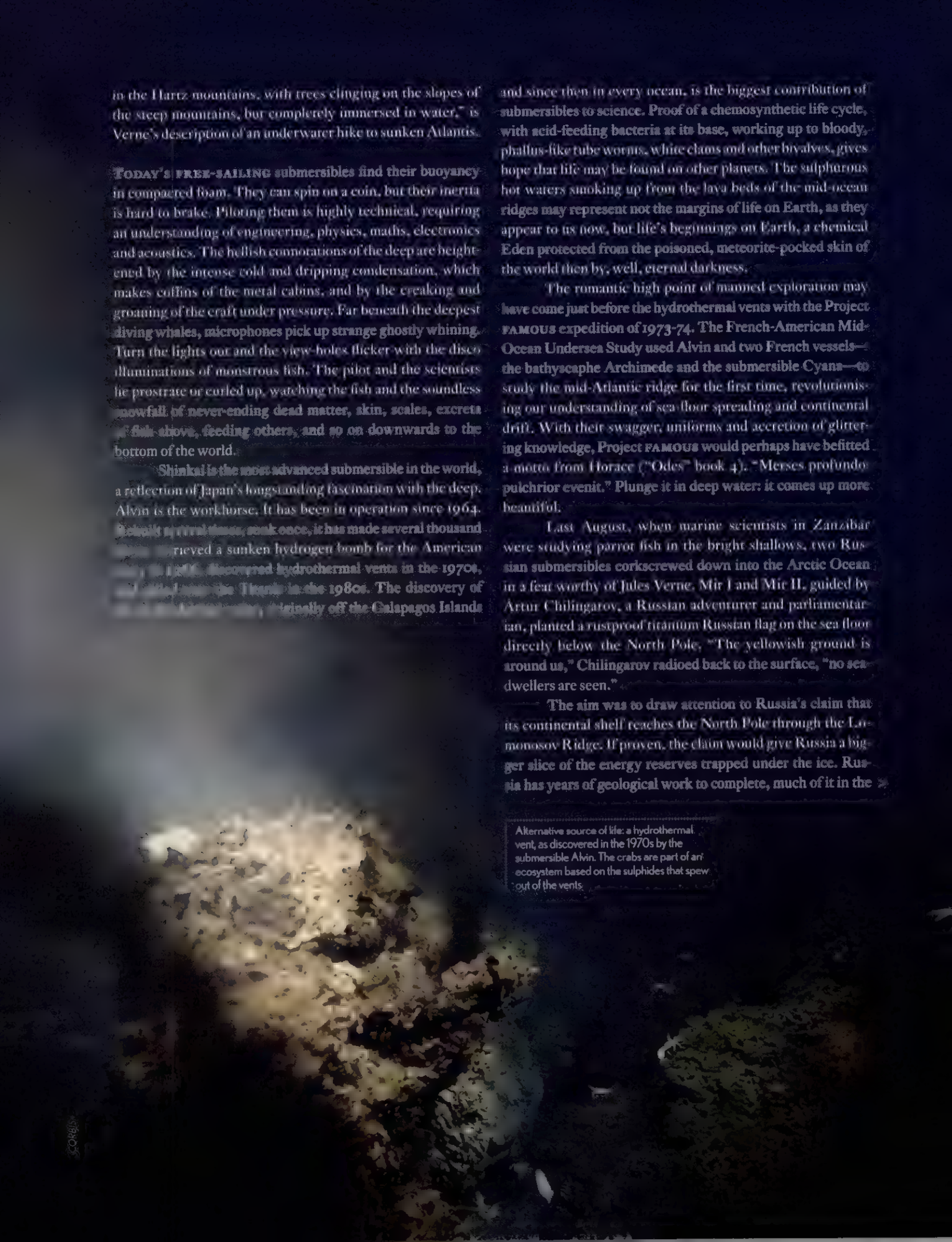
TODAY'S FREE-SAILING submersibles find their buoyancy in compacted foam. They can spin on a coin, but their inertia is hard to brake. Piloting them is highly technical, requiring an understanding of engineering, physics, maths, electronics and acoustics. The hellish connotations of the deep are heightened by the intense cold and dripping condensation, which makes coffins of the metal cabins, and by the creaking and groaning of the craft under pressure. Far beneath the deepest diving whales, microphones pick up strange ghostly whining. Turn the lights out and the view-holes flicker with the disco illuminations of monstrous fish. The pilot and the scientists lie prostrate or curled up, watching the fish and the soundless snowfall of never-ending dead matter, skin, scales, excreta [illegible] fish above, feeding others, and so on downwards to the bottom of the world.

Shinkai is the most advanced submersible in the world, a reflection of Japan's longstanding fascination with the deep. Alvin is the workhorse. It has been in operation since 1964. [illegible] sunk once, it has made several thousand [illegible] rieved a sunken hydrogen bomb for the American [illegible] discovered hydrothermal vents in the 1970s, [illegible] the Titanic in the 1980s. The discovery of [illegible] originally off the Galapagos Islands and since then in every ocean, is the biggest contribution of submersibles to science. Proof of a chemosynthetic life cycle, with acid-feeding bacteria at its base, working up to bloody, phallus-like tube worms, white clams and other bivalves, gives hope that life may be found on other planets. The sulphurous hot waters smoking up from the lava beds of the mid-ocean ridges may represent not the margins of life on Earth, as they appear to us now, but life's beginnings on Earth, a chemical Eden protected from the poisoned, meteorite-pocked skin of the world then by, well, eternal darkness.

The romantic high point of manned exploration may have come just before the hydrothermal vents with the Project FAMOUS expedition of 1973-74. The French-American Mid-Ocean Undersea Study used Alvin and two French vessels—the bathyscaphe Archimede and the submersible Cyana—to study the mid-Atlantic ridge for the first time, revolutionising our understanding of sea-floor spreading and continental drift. With their swagger, uniforms and accretion of glittering knowledge, Project FAMOUS would perhaps have befitted a motto from Horace ("Odes" book 4). "Merses profundo pulchrior evenit." Plunge it in deep water: it comes up more beautiful.

Last August, when marine scientists in Zanzibar were studying parrot fish in the bright shallows, two Russian submersibles corkscrewed down into the Arctic Ocean in a feat worthy of Jules Verne. Mir I and Mir II, guided by Artur Chilingarov, a Russian adventurer and parliamentarian, planted a rustproof titanium Russian flag on the sea floor directly below the North Pole. "The yellowish ground is around us," Chilingarov radioed back to the surface, "no sea-dwellers are seen."

The aim was to draw attention to Russia's claim that its continental shelf reaches the North Pole through the Lomonosov Ridge. If proven, the claim would give Russia a bigger slice of the energy reserves trapped under the ice. Russia has years of geological work to complete, much of it in the »



Alternative source of life: a hydrothermal vent, as discovered in the 1970s by the submersible Alvin. The crabs are part of an ecosystem based on the sulphides that spew out of the vents

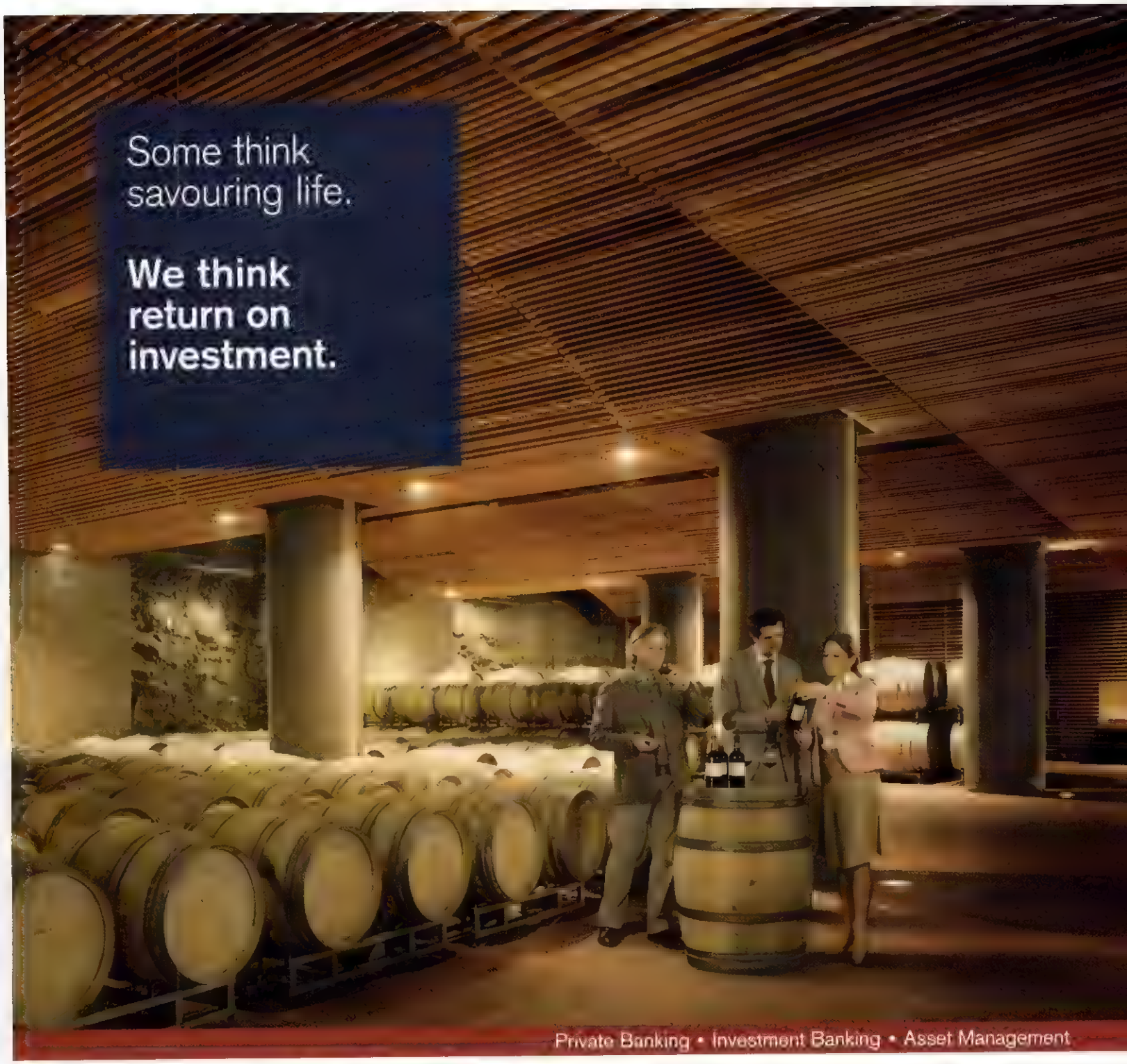
"We viewed creatures which had evolved in a blue midnight which...had known no following day": the bigfin reef squid

Mir submersibles, before filing a case to the International Seabed Authority. Canada, which is competing for the same resources, dismissed the flag-planting as belonging to the 15th century. The Canadian snippiness obscured the considerable technical achievement of getting a support vessel to the North Pole and then operating the submersibles in freezing conditions. The Russian media likened the 4,300-metre dive to planting a flag on the moon. It was not that, but it sparked the imagination because it was humans—aquanauts—planting the flag.

Even so, times are changing. New technology is making unmanned drones smarter and more durable. While the Mirs wowed the press, a scientific expedition in another part of the Arctic used drones to investigate the Gakkel Ridge. The findings of that less risky expedition, including the mapping of active volcanoes under the ice cap, will prove important. Advocates of drones argue that the age of manned ocean flight is already over. Bob Ballard, an American oceanographer who moved from piloting submersibles to advocating drones, has proved the worth of remotely operated vehicles by discovering the wrecks of the Titanic and the Bismarck. He says that improvements in telepresence make it possible for scientists to sit in a warm ship's cabin and pilot a drone using a joystick, zooming in and out as they please, in sharp contrast to the sickness-inducing rides in submersibles.

"And if you gaze long into an abyss," wrote Nietzsche, "the abyss gazes also into you." Supporters of manned submersibles concede Ballard's point—drones will do most of the science work—but think aquanauts can keep the public engaged. That more finely tuned sense of public relations, rare among oceanographers, was the reason why the Alvin patched through a recent call to the International Space Station from several thousand metres below the surface. A new Alvin is being commissioned, with improved operating range, but the future of ocean descent is commercial, including small craft modelled on Cousteau's Sea Flea submersible, which use wings rather than simple ballast and thrust.

Of course, another way of keeping the public engaged would be to inject some levity into oceanography. Cousteau's pitch is particularly easy to parody, nowhere more so than in Wes Anderson's impeccable film, "The Life Aquatic", in which Bill Murray played Steve Zissou, a washed-up American Cousteau. Team Zissou sport uniforms influenced by Cousteau or perhaps Project Famous. Steve prefers the ship's sauna and galley to its laboratory. When his colleague, Esteban, is eaten by a previously unknown species of monster shark, Steve vows to find it and destroy it. "What would be the scientific purpose of that?" a member of the audience at an Italian film festival asks Steve. He blinks. "Revenge." The film's closing sequence, in which most of the cast get to dive in Steve's oversized submersible, highlights what ocean flight is not but how we should wish it to become, defter, swifter, vertiginous yet smoother, with sweeping visions of creatures as yet unnamed. ■



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CAIRO'S LAST BATHS

DECIMATED, DILAPIDATED, AND RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING, CAIRO'S HAMMAMS ARE THE MOST RUN DOWN IN THE MIDDLE EAST. OVER THE NEXT 12 PAGES, WE SHOW **PASCAL MEUNIER**'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF THIS VANISHING WORLD. HERE HE EXPLAINS WHAT DREW HIM TO CAPTURE IT

I FIRST TASTED the sweetness of Eastern life in the work of 19th-century orientalists such as Flaubert, Dumas, Ingres and Delacroix. For the past eight years, as a photographer, I have searched for it in Arab baths, or hammams, from Mauritania to Central Asia. My pictures are now devoted to an architectural and cultural heritage that is about to disappear: the baths of Cairo.

They say that in the reign of the Mamluks–from 1382 to 1517–there were 365 hammams in Cairo, one for each day of the year. Today only a dozen or so are left. Some date back to the 14th century. Their disappearance may not be as spectacular as the demolition of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, in Afghanistan, but it is just as inexorable.

In the old parts of Cairo, the houses have no real sanitation. Even so, hardly anyone visits the hammams–although they are open day and night–because they have this seedy reputation. They are the most run-down baths in the Arab world.

Ever since radical groups set out to impose the sort of strict morals embraced by the Taliban, the baths have been seen as a subversive place: a couple of decades ago it was in the hammams that the opposition would meet to organise resistance to the Egyptian government. The fundamentalists associated the hammams with homosexuality, which gave them a bad reputation. And, although there is no gay scene as such, it is true that certain baths were havens for gays.

The baths are also dangerous because they are one of the last places where women are free to let down their guard (men are not allowed in). They can spend a whole day in a hammam–with their children, perhaps. When little boys see women naked for the first time, it can awaken the senses–and that is dangerous, too.

Ideology is not the only thing driving clients away. The authorities told the owners "you are plundering the ground water", or "you are polluting the air". For centuries people brought along waste that was chucked into enormous boilers which heated water for the baths. But they ordered the baths to use gas-heating–at ruinous expense. No bathers, no money, no upkeep.

Over the years, the decay and the seediness became disastrous. So the state decided that the last hammams in Cairo should be designated as historic monuments. Now their owners have to ask the inert Egyptian bureaucracy for authorisation before they make even the smallest repair.

To make ends meet, some owners earn a few piastres by taking in the homeless, outcasts, people from the countryside, and *fellahs* from High Egypt. Or they live there with their families. Everything conspires to make the baths unsuitable. In my pictures there are hardly any bathers. And yet beneath their secular vaults, despite the mould, the acrid smells and the seclusion, Cairo's last hammams are ruled by a tragic pleasure–one that precedes a disaster. ■

Pascal Meunier was talking to Odette Audebeau. His photographs of the hammams will be published as a book later this year.

Hammam El Arba: Five centuries ago, this hammam was built near the port of Weksiat Al-Balah, where boats were loaded with rice and dates. The sailors came to the baths for therapy; you can still get a vigorous massage on the marble slab. The owner himself painted the striplights red, green and blue

HAMMAM BICHRI: A bather lies on the *fasqiya*, an octagonal slab, as light shines through the few holes that have not been plugged. The idea is to stop heat escaping and children snooping, but Ashraf, the owner, can't afford to fix the broken glass

Top

HAMMAM SALIBA: Shut for bathing for the past 25 years, the hammam Saliba has been turned into a factory containing tiny workshops. A craftsman is tooling leather in the room that used to house the pool

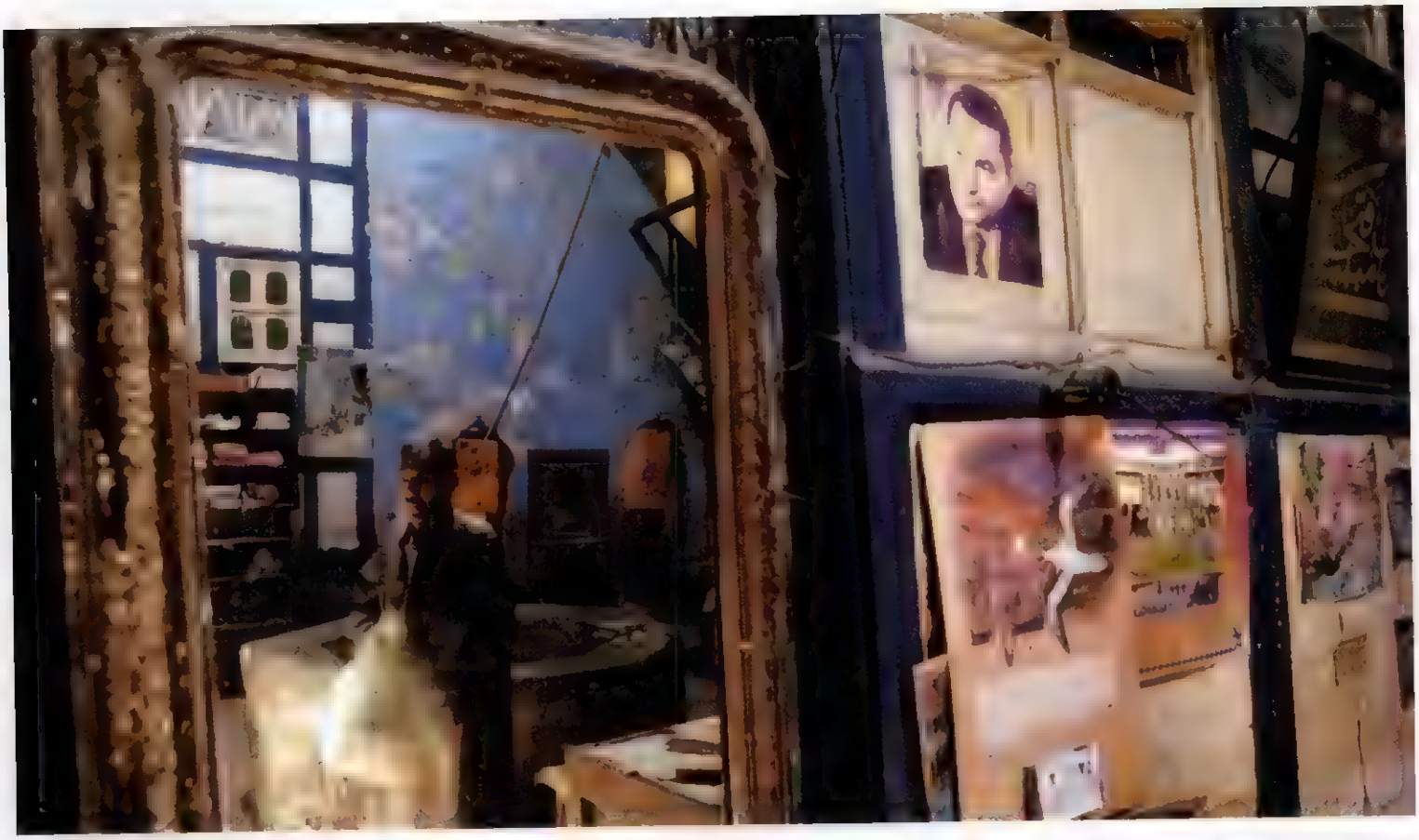
Above

HAMMAM BARUDIYA: This is the lodge, where the owner a retired colonel from the Egyptian army—used to keep the wooden chests that stored bathers' things. Now he has blocked up the door with his own stuff—a radio, calendars and calligraphy

when there are no bathers. Essam, the owner,
the hammam in the evening. He fills the hours by
ear—and the chicken

HAMMAM TAMBALI: Around the central room of the bath, four small alcoves, known as *maqbas*, dispense hot steam. The few clients can soak in the boiling-hot water of the pool.

Hammam Tambali: A far cry from "One Thousand and One Nights" and the luxury of the orientalists. The walls are covered in saltpetre, which is not particularly clean. And yet the steam bath is still somewhere to think, to come to fortify yourself before an important decision.



Top
HAMMAM SULTAN QALAOUN: One of Cairo's oldest baths, catering for an all-male and mostly poor clientele. The mirror frames faces that are worn from the struggle to survive

Above
HAMMAM MARGOUSH: Anyone who needs a few hours' escape from the infernal rhythm of the town can rent space here. The money helps the baths to stay open

HAMMAM MARGOUSH: The entrance is through a long basement passage, which enables you to leave behind the noise of the street. It keeps the entrance hall warm—and prevents passers-by from ogling clients

BRIGHT OLD THINGS

MORE AND MORE PEOPLE ARE REACHING THEIR 90S—AND LIVING A FULL LIFE. **MAUREEN CLEAVE**, A MERE 73, ASKS FOUR OF THEM WHAT LIES AHEAD

Aïkar boy, war hero, Buddhist and nonagenarian tennis player: Brian Power

I'M 73. THAT used to mean being one of the older generation. Now we've been downgraded: books are written about us with titles like "Late Youth". "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?" Paul McCartney sang, in his 20s. With many of us still working full-time in our 70s, the question seems daft. We're not allowed to be old, to sit around with rugs over our knees, complaining. We're coy about our age. We dye our hair, the men having trouble with sideburns that seem to grow white again faster than the rest. We model clothes in fashion magazines, marry again, up sticks and live in the Bahamas. If we have rheumatism, we say it's tendonitis. But we don't fool anyone: the young don't give us the time of day; to them we're boring. If we run in the London marathon, no one notices. We've been supplanted by the 80- and 90-year-olds, who grab all the attention. Young people find the really old curious and rather interesting. They help them unload their shopping, listen to what they say. As Alan Bennett said in his diary, you have only to eat a soft boiled egg when you're really old for everyone to say how wonderful you are. For this article, I interviewed four people over 90, all in full possession of their wits (the general thinking is that physical decline is easier to cope with than mental). They had the interest of historical personages in that three of them had direct experience of the war. They all agreed that the worst time of day was when you first wake up in the morning, their advice being to get going immediately. Three of them were writing books, one was still driving a car, only one believed in God. Most surprising was that none of them complained, none feared for the future. I decided that the secret of a contented old age is a sunny disposition.

LEO ABSE 91

"IF YOU WANT TO LIVE A LONG TIME, LOVE AND BE LOVED"

EIGHT YEARS AGO, when he was 83, Leo Abse married for the second time. His first wife Marjorie had died four years before. His new wife, the gentle Ania Czepulkowska from Poland, 50 years his junior, was doing an MA at the Royal College of Art when they met over his garden fence. She was strolling along the Thames towpath with a friend; he was smoking a cigar and doing a bit of pruning.

The two most difficult stages in the human lifespan, he says, are adolescence and old age. "You grow out of adolescence, you grow into old age and what you need for a happy old age is love," adding in his saucy way, "someone in his 80s should not have roving thoughts. Ania married me for sex, I married her for her money!" He must add her practical skills: she had worked as a mechanic and electrician in the Gdansk shipyards, the only woman among 31 men. Now, she has just reglazed one of the windows in his sunny drawing room overlooking the Thames, where he reads his *Guardian*. He is at his desk by 10.30 every morning, after Ania has given him a light breakfast and a shave. He's very deaf but he can always hear Ania. She never raises her voice. Without her, he says, he would not have survived the stroke he had five years ago.

Looking back on his life, as a lawyer, MP and writer, he sees nothing but good. "I had two great advantages: I was born a Jew in Wales in the benign climate of Welsh non-conformity; we believed we had a covenant with God and God would look after us. Being in a minority within a minority, I had the benefit of being an outsider without feeling inferior. And I never went to university, which meant I wasn't groomed to conform."

The art of staying alive, he says, is never to repeat yourself. "Keep stretched. Once you just do what you can do, you repeat yourself. When I left school, I worked in a factory. After the war, with a government grant, I became a solicitor, then a criminal lawyer and, after I'd defended all the criminals and rapists, I moved into industrial accident and employment law."

He even sees some value in the short spell he spent in prison while serving with the RAF during the war, when he was arrested for standing up in the Forces Parliament and arguing that the Bank of England should be nationalised. "Very good experience for a politician to be arrested and put in prison. If people like Blair had worn uniform and had had experience of war, they might not have sent young men to Iraq. This gang—Blair, Brown and so on—they're too young, they have no capital, no hinterland. I find it ironic that these whippersnappers have made such a cock-up of governance. The finest governance we had was that of Clement Attlee which brought in the Welfare State. When the average age of the Cabinet was 60, these men recast the whole structure of Britain."

As an MP, Abse passed more private member's legislation than any man in the 20th century, all of it relating to human relationships: divorce, homosexuality, widows' damages and, most important of all, the Children Act of 1975, dealing with fostering and adoption. After 30 years, true to his principles, he got out. "Being in the cabinet never interested me. Margaret Thatcher vetoed me for the House of Lords and did me a good turn. Unlike the ageing opera star, you've got to know when to give up. I became Leo Abse, writer and former MP."

He wrote not his autobiography—"Write your autobiography and you're writing your obituary"—but books about Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. (The first edition of Tony Blair was called "The Man Behind the Smile", the second, "The Man Who Lost His Smile".) Then he wrote a major work, "The Bisexuality of Daniel Defoe".

Life, he says, is inevitably tragic, because we are born to die. "If you want to live a long time, love and be loved. I married two women who loved me. And you can continue living productively if you follow the rule of the Roman stoics—carpe diem. Don't live expectantly, live for the day."

What he calls his valedictory work is a collection of essays in which characters from the Bible are subjected to Freudian scrutiny, for instance the nakedness of Noah and the curse of Ham. There's another on Moses the Stammerer. "This is about speech defects in leadership. Demosthenes used to put a pebble in his mouth to conquer his speech difficulties. The most famous orator of my lifetime was Nye Bevan and he was a >

> stammerer. He had a wonderful vocabulary because every night he would sit with a Thesaurus, looking for alternative words."

And there will be a very naughty essay about Abishag. "When King David is old and dying, the servants have a committee meeting and decide the way to get him better is to search Israel for the prettiest girl they can find—Abishag. Then it says, 'But David knew her not.' If you really read your Bible, you'll find she gave David new life. He knew her all right, just as I knew my Ania."

DIANA ATHILL 90

"SEVENTY IS THE BEGINNING OF BEING OLD"

DIANA ATHILL LIVES alone in London, very near Primrose Hill. "The only sound", she said, "is people talking to their dogs." There are books everywhere. She was a publisher all her working life, then took to writing herself: five volumes of memoirs that included some rather steamy affairs. They all made a splash, none more so than the latest, "Somewhere Towards the End", which is about old age and approaching death. "Reviews all over the place, including one in the *Morning Star* which ended: 'It is sad to think that the secret of a spry and contented old age is selfishness.' I was rather put in my place.

"At first I thought there wasn't much to say about growing older except that it's bloody. Seventy is the beginning of being old, I felt really old when I was 80 and really really old when I was 90." What she calls the ebbing of sex comes in the late 60s. "Rather a relief, not going to bed with anyone any more. One has the chance to enjoy men for other reasons."

If she had one piece of advice it would be to get up in the morning. "What you must do is defy the languid movement, get out of bed and make yourself do something." She gets up, she gardens, she sews, she writes, sometimes she reads till 3am; often she drives to Norfolk at weekends to a house she shares with her cousin, finding driving easier than walking, which she does with a stick.

What does get better, she said, is not minding what people think. "Though I enjoy bothering about clothes and I don't like being seen without a good foundation to hide the veins and the shiny bits. My hair is very short because I've hardly any left, just a spider's web over a pink scalp, but my dear man in Regent's Park who cuts it agrees it's not wig time yet.

"It's false cheerfulness to say things get better because most things get worse, but occasionally things that are rarer in one's life can be more delicious: a recent visit to York, for instance—absolute heaven when I got there. Or seeing the Russians at the Royal Academy from a self-propelling wheelchair, or playing with little Alexander who's just moved in downstairs. One of the things that make me love writing or looking at pictures is that you become unconscious of yourself. Anything absorbing makes you become not 'I' but 'eye'—you escape the ego."

There's no point in worrying about the future because there's nothing to be done about it. "As Shakespeare says, 'The coward dies many times before his death.' I haven't gone gaga, I'm not lonely, I have friends who are great fun. The actual business of dying is pure luck, and when you're older your heart is more likely to just stop. I'm counting on that. My Uncle Billy fell off his horse in the middle of telling a story, out hunting with the Norwich stag hounds. It's always shocked me how quickly one gets used to the death of dear friends."

The fear of death, she said, is a profound instinct. "We're all afraid of it. We try to ward it off, make up stories about floating up to heaven. Then there are people like me who cheer themselves up by thinking that death is a part of life; everything that ever lived has died and will die. I suppose I want to be remembered as quite a nice person, but it doesn't really bother me." What about funerals? She'd go for the good old C of E: "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust—it serves its purpose. I don't want someone who's never met me saying pious things about me."

In the meantime, the secret is to keep working. "I've got to the bottom of my personal experience and now I'd like to know more about my mother's generation. If you write as honestly as you can, it's most therapeutic. I think about the past quite a lot; I think about the good bits. This must depend on temperament—if you're naturally optimistic. I was born that way."

It surprises her that she's never much minded not having children. "I love playing with Alexander, but I'm glad I'm not his grandmother. Something in me didn't want to get involved in something that was more important than anything else." So had that reviewer discovered the secret of a contented old age? "Selfishness," she says. "A sobering thought—I think the bastard's probably right."

BETTY STEVENS 90

"GOD DECIDES HOW LONG WE'RE GOING TO LIVE"

WHAT IS INTERESTING about Betty Stevens is of slight interest to herself: the fact, for example, that she has nine children, 32 grandchildren and 32 great grandchildren, with two more on the way. That's 73 descendants. "Children? They just rear—it's not as though they all come at once. I'm just a bit of a damp squib, an old widow of 40 years." She was settled comfortably on the sofa in her pretty drawing room. She has soft white hair, a clear voice and perfect teeth. "Gnashers in good order," she said. She is 90 and lives in St Andrew's. She has two daughters with her much of the time, and kind Mrs Peace who comes three times a week to clean and, she says, make her laugh.

Her father worked for the Great Western Railway in Berkshire; she and her younger sister played in the garden, shared a governess with the vicar's children and did as they were told—until Betty was almost 18. Then they sought out a certain Canon Kernan and, under his instruction, converted to Catholicism, to the consternation of their Anglican mother.

Two years later Betty married Charles Phillips Stevens, a Catholic doctor, and regular officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps. War was in the offing. He was posted to the Middle East and they spent four years darting between Palestine and Egypt. He was planning for the invasion, converting an 80-bed army hospital to 1,200 beds. Their first baby was born in the Anglo-Swiss hospital in Alexandria. "It was absolutely hilarious. The matron wasn't a midwife at all but a Hungarian countess, which really appealed to the rich cotton wives having babies there. The nurses would shout, 'Poussez, Madame, poussez'." Betty's first baby was a boy. The >

"It's fun being history": Betty Stevens, who has 73 descendants
PORTRAIT MURDO M[illegible]EOD

> next two were born in the Anglo-American hospital in Cairo.

"War made little impact on ordinary life in Egypt. There was plenty to eat, no difficulty getting servants. In an odd way it was the best time of our lives. We would clamber up the Great Pyramid of Giza, sit on top and survey the world. It was an interesting time for me—I like looking at things from the sidelines. I knew the plan was to hold the Germans at Alamein, which was a secret." She paused. "It's funny being history—it's as though I'm telling you about Noah's ark."

In 1943, the crisis over in the Middle East, they came home on the RMS Aquitania—Betty, her husband, two little boys, a baby girl and another on the way. The journey took six weeks. "It was a troop ship full of these poor soldiers with nothing to do but sit around on deck." The two boys had a fine time dashing all over the place. "One day this immaculate young officer came and saluted smartly: 'The captain's compliments to Mrs Stevens. Would she kindly keep the children out of the gun turrets? We may have to use them.'

"When we got home, my husband's parents, the soul of goodness, took us in. The house was on the river in Maidenhead. It had ten bedrooms and we needed every one"—certainly by the time five more children had arrived. They all went to boarding schools; Catholic schools reduced their fees for large families.

By now two daughters, Clare and Mary, are in the room, talking about what fun it was, lots of friends to stay, always an extra place laid at the table in case. "The younger ones had life jackets," Clare said, "but falling in the river was the thing to do." She remembers the great flood of 1947, her grandmother cooking in the kitchen in her galoshes, ducks coming through the French window. When their father died in 1966, the nine children were between 13 and 26, their mother only 48. "And that's the end of the story," Betty Stevens says. "After that I just was."

Except, of course, there was still a lot to be done.

"We're given a pattern in life and God decides how long we're going to live. I was reared by God-fearing parents and I married a saintly man. I believe God made us for Himself. It's like being a child in the arms of its parent, feeling completely safe."

We shouldn't expect to be happy in old age, she says: contentment is enough. "I have an absurd sense of the ridiculous—I see life in a series of cartoons. If I do a quick reccy, I'm jolly lucky. I can't see to read any more but I can walk more or less, I have enough money to keep going, I listen to the wireless, Clare takes me to Mass every Saturday. I wake up at ten in the morning in a nice warm bed, aches and pains gone in the night, and I say the Rosary. I have peace of mind. God is my keeping-going."

BRIAN POWER 90

"AGE IS RELATIVE...OLD ONE MOMENT, YOUNG AGAIN AT TEA-TIME"

SIXTY-FIVE YEARS ago, Brian Power was left for dead near Mount Etna in Sicily. A lieutenant in the Royal Irish Fusiliers, he was leading a company of men in a river crossing when he was hit by a bullet above the heart; the pack of Verey light cartridges on his back exploded like fireworks, setting fire to his clothes, a bullet went into his thigh and out the other side, and both lungs filled with blood. "Just leave him," said the medical officer, but Barney, the sergeant in charge of the stretcher bearers, disobeyed orders, loaded him on to an armoured carrier and drove back into the hills. Two months later Power was back in England. It took a year to patch him up, whereupon he asked to return to his battalion in Austria.

He is now 90 and married to the beautiful Prunella Stack, who is 93 and president of the Women's Fitness League, founded by her mother in 1930. They saw me in their sunny sitting room in London. "Prunella and I laugh a lot," Brian said. Once a week he cycles to the Hurlingham Club to play tennis in a four with an average age of 84. He is writing his first novel.

He has a colourful past. Of Catholic Irish stock, he was born in Tianjin, China, where he lived for 18 years with two brothers and a discontented mother (his father, who was in the Imperial Chinese Customs Service, had died). Chinese is his first language. He wrote a lovely book about this childhood called "The Ford of Heaven".

Educated first by the Marist Brothers and then the Jesuits, who rather hoped he might have a vocation, he was acolyte to the Jesuit palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin, who took part in the discovery of Peking Man. "I was his altar boy. I served Mass and sang in the choir. Teilhard was very charming in a slightly lofty way but I learnt nothing from him. For me, God happened outside church, never inside. I learnt everything from my amah, Yi Jieh: love, affection, balance, calmness in feverish surroundings, every sort of religious instinct came from her—peasant wisdom.

"What I became good at was living in the imagination. You invent things as you go along. If someone drops in, I listen to the conversation for a bit and then I drift into another realm. I start imagining things: they talk about Chelsea, I think of Venice. I might compose a poem about what they're wearing. It prevents life being boring." He deliberately forgets his hearing aid because it interferes with the imagination.

When he came back to England, he was never to see Yi Jieh again. He writes in his memoir, "She took my face in her two hands and pressed them firmly, as if it would help her to remember me."

He read history at King's College, London, and, after the war, became a barrister. He has reassuring news here: "A lot more crimes and murders were committed then, nastier and more frequent. Now the news is a diet of horrors. They do anything to put a crime in front of us, when in fact things have got better."

He then came up with something called Advocacy for the Layman. "Rules on how to present a case, how to be brief yet leave nothing vital out. Time is precious; no one wants to listen to your homework. It went like a bomb. I taught all over the place, politicians, medical people, in the army, ICI, the House of Lords, the Foreign Office..." It's also useful when giving advice to the young. "Two sentences is too much—their eyes glaze over and you can see them thinking: 'Is there a window I can get out of?'"

Ageing, he says, takes one by surprise. "There's no point at which I say I am old. I've always believed in relativity: you can feel incredibly old one moment, middle-aged in the afternoon, young again at tea-time to the point of being skittish, and then very old by 11. I don't think about death much. I think more and more of the idea that God is nature. Spinoza and Einstein both said God is nature—God is in a butterfly that lives for the afternoon; Blake saw a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower. A matter-of-fact attitude to the body seems to take over. After all, it doesn't occur to the butterfly to worry about dying. I've gone back full circle to what my amah taught." (The irony is Prunella converted to Catholicism.)

But what happened to Barney? Apparently he ended his days happily in the Chelsea Hospital down the road and often came to tea. When he died in 1992, Brian Power gave the address at his funeral. ■

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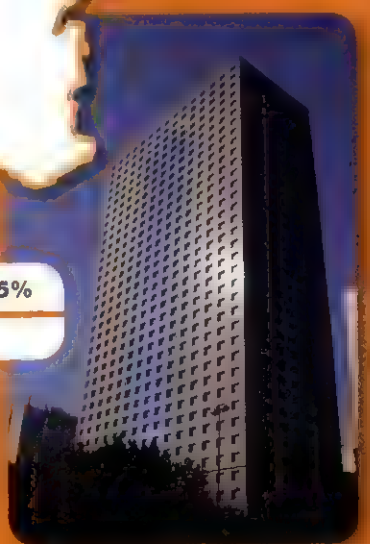

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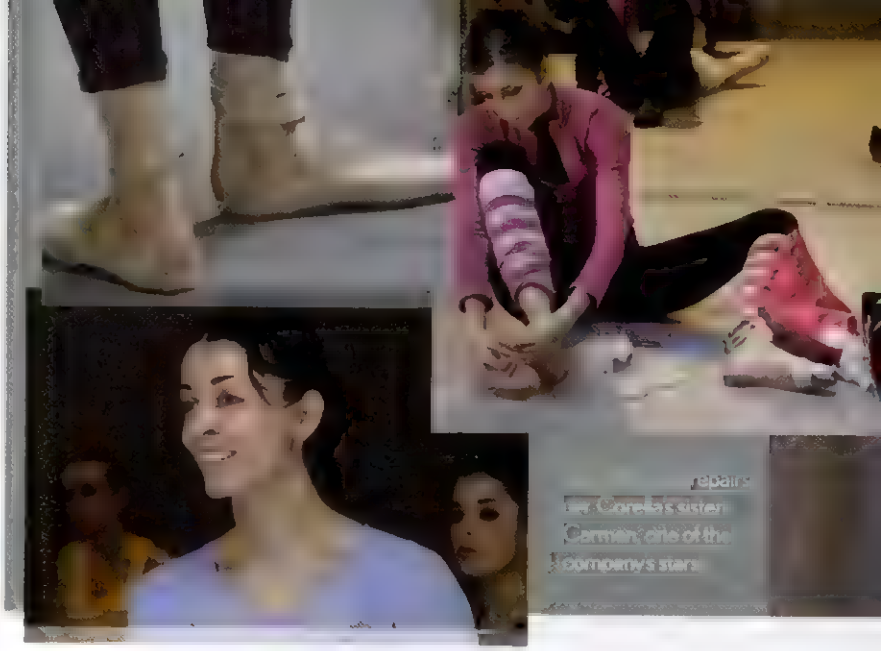
JULIE KAVANAGH

SPAIN'S DANCE HERITAGE dates back to Carthaginian times, when castanets were seashells, but its classical ballet tradition is 30 years old, if that. Since 1978 small ballet companies have started up and petered out, and yet half a dozen international stars—American Ballet Theatre's Angel Corella and the Royal Ballet's Tamara Rojo among them—owe their fabulous techniques to Spanish training. It was because there was no native company for him to join that the 19-year-old Corella was forced to go abroad, leaving home in Madrid and joining ABT, with only a few words of English, in 1995. Rumours of his gifts sparked such a buzz that he was profiled in the *New York Times* before making his American debut, and today you have only to Google "Corella pirouettes" to see why. YouTube has clips of his trademark multiple turns taken from a single preparation, his 1994 gold-medal-winning solo, his reinvention of hackneyed old variations from "Don Quixote" and "Le Corsaire". However, no filmed evidence gives any idea of the thrill Corella generates on stage. "Dancing is communicating," he says. "It's all to do with energy. I want people to come and have fun with me, to feel part of what I'm doing—to feel that they're up there dancing themselves." I'll never forget a Royal Opera House matinée of "Don Quixote" in 2001 when Corella partnered the 20-year-old Romanian Alina Cojocaru, known more as a lyrical than a virtuoso ballerina. Cojocaru, challenged by Corella, began risking feats way beyond her range, producing the kind of mass adrenalin rush in the audience that occurs once in a decade. Corella heard screams, whistles and whoops, and afterwards learnt that a party of Royal Ballet School (RBS) pupils was responsible. When asked by their director, Gailene Stock, if he would give a masterclass in pirouettes, Corella immediately agreed—because he's that kind of guy, and because he saw a visit to White Lodge, the junior school located in a royal hunting lodge in Richmond Park, as an opportunity to research a project close to his heart. >

PHOTOGRAPHS ROSS MACGIBBON



repairs
the Corella's sister
Carmen, one of the
company's stars

For some time he had been considering starting a residential academy as a first step to establishing a major ballet company in Spain. Only years of consistent and rigorous training in a vocational school can produce dancers with a homogeneous, national identity. (In 1933, when the Renaissance-style patron Lincoln Kirstein invited George Balanchine to form a classical company in America, Balanchine cabled back: "Yes, but first a school.") This priority was not an option for Corella. The government was not prepared to fund another dance venture on top of the Compañía Nacional de Danza, a contemporary group run by Nacho Duato and Ballet Victor Ullate. Deciding to "do it the American way", Corella started a foundation and spent the next seven years—"seven years of hell"—raising money from wealthy individuals and corporations. His backers, many of them American, expected to see something for their money, and so a company had to come first.

Auditions began in March 2007, attracting 750 candidates from around the world. Apart from a sound schooling and technique, the qualities Corella sought were youth and attack—the right attitude, even more than the right look. Helping him make his choice were two world-renowned dance figures: the ABT ballerina Cynthia Harvey, appointed as Corella's assistant, and the ex-Bolshoi star and director Vladimir Vassiliev, hired to coach the men. "It was extraordinary", Corella recalls, "because after class when we compared notes we found we'd picked exactly the same people." Among their choice of 54 dancers of eight different nationalities, 20 were Spanish, and half a dozen RBS trained—almost all there, they claimed, "because of Angel". "I grew up watching and being inspired by his videos," said Russell Ducker, an RBS graduate of 20. "This is an amazing opportunity to be close to Angel and learn from him—to share in his dream."

The first real breakthrough came in 2006 when Patrimonio Nacional offered Corella a former royal palace, Santa Cecilia, at the foot of the Guadarrama mountains near Segovia. Close by is the town of La Granja de San Ildefonso, famous for its spectacular, Versailles-inspired palace and gardens, created in the 1720s as a country retreat for Philip V, who had fallen for the region while out hunting. Santa Cecilia's wooded, lakeside setting has retained its twilit atmosphere—the kind of place you might expect swan maidens to appear.

The decision was made to house the ballet school in the palace itself and to create an adjacent contemporary space—two blocks of glass incorporating five studios, a cafeteria, gym and computer rooms. But as the construction of what Corella predicts will be "one of the best dance installations in Europe" is scheduled to take three years, a temporary base in La Granja was necessary. A garage used for storing fire trucks was donated by a local multimillionaire, and while this was being renovated the dancers began rehearsing in the sports hall of the new Parador Hotel.

IT'S 10.15AM ONE April day and the company, just under two weeks old, is assembled for class. Posters of Corella brighten the concrete walls, but this is a makeshift arrangement with temporary barres and no canteen—not even a coffee machine. Their director is in Chicago with ABT, but has left a mafioso stronghold in place: his ballerina sister Carmen, a tall, serene beauty with the same huge, dark eyes, and her Argentine husband, the diminutive but dazzling ABT virtuoso Herman Cornejo, who has begun dividing his time between New York and La Granja. Carmen begins barre wearing snowboots and gradually peels off layers as the temperature rises. After half an hour the fug in the windowless studio is so intense that one dancer fetches a windscreen squeejee to wipe the mirror. The two stars take their place at the front, flanked by uniformly petite girls and a mixed bunch of males. (Several principals have yet to arrive, including Birmingham Royal Ballet's Ian Mackay and Joseph Gatti from Cincinnati Ballet.)

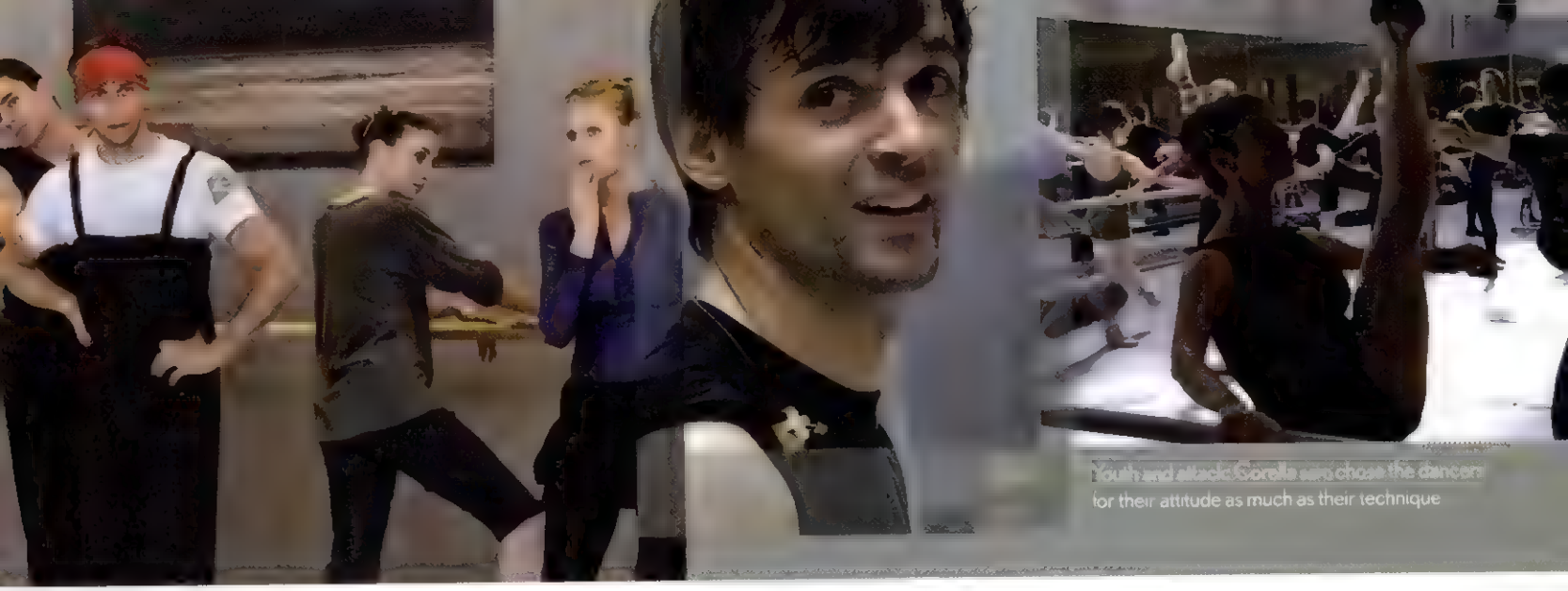
In charge of class is the impish Kazemia Moreno, a Cuban ex-dancer trained in Havana and Moscow, who taught the Corella siblings as well as Tamara Rojo at Victor Ullate's school. She proudly calls Angel her "realisation", while he says he owes her his career. "She gave me that power. Her classes are so strong that she gave me the freedom to go on stage and not think about technique but just exude energy." Moreno had been on the verge of retiring when Corella asked her to come on board. "She was in heaven."

Flitting between at least five languages in a barely audible whisper, she is clearly a character. She crumples to the floor to warn a dancer about a defective landing, and turns up the volume when she wants to make a point. "It's not only heel...*Les cuisses, les cuisses—ROTADO!*" There was one long, passionate rant about something I couldn't catch at all. "I was trying to give them the spirit," she explains later. "In Russia, even at the barre, I was taught to *dance.*" Several members of the company, though, unaccustomed to such taxing classes—more like fluid, choreographed variations than academic exercises—are struggling to cope.

"The lads were a little concerned and I had to reassure them," Corella told me later. "I said, 'Just calm down and trust. It will come with time.'" The ABT ballet mistress Susan Jones, who had watched Moreno teach for the first time the previous morning, was full of admiration. "She's an amazing teacher, and I think her effect on the company is going to be enormous."

Jones had arrived for a week at La Granja to teach Natalia Makarova's full-length "La Bayadère", Ballet de España's inaugural production, which will be performed at the Teatro Real in Madrid on September 5th-9th. A theatrical masterpiece combining high melodrama and spectacle with an exquisitely poetic "white" act that distils classical dance to its essence of purity and control, it could not present more of a challenge to a hybrid new company. When Nureyev was first asked to mount his version of the minimalist Kingdom of the Shades act for Paris Opéra Ballet, he refused. "It's not a ballet you get, it's a ballet you grow into," he said, meaning that the individualistic French dancers would have to learn "to breathe like one". I wasn't surprised to hear that Jones had received an anxious phone call from Makarova after the first rehearsal quizzing her about the company's ability. "It's wonderful she's doing this for Angel; she's totally supportive," says Jones,

I want people to come and have fun with me, to feel part of what I'm doing—



Youth and attack: Corella says he chose the dancers for their attitude as much as their technique

adding that conversely, "La Bayadère" will help form Ballet de España, allowing dancers from different schools, who are still strangers to each other, to bond. "It provides such a foundation for a company. There were lessons the ABT corps learnt from the process of doing 'Bayadère' which filtered into every other work they went on to perform."

On her second day, Jones is teaching the girls the legendary Shades entrance when a long, single file of corps de ballet hypnotically repeat the slow arabesque sequence that seems to last into eternity. It's fascinating to watch it take shape: the regimental lines fixed by strips of tape stuck to the floor—"If one girl passes the tape, it messes up for everyone else"—and by each dancer keeping the two beside her in each corner of her eyes. Their first attempt is just for spacing, and Jones has suggested they mark through the positions, but they instinctively go all-out as if they're already on stage, their expressions rapt and utterly focused. As Jones says, the intensity of the Shades scene is almost metaphysical. "It's the power of unifying everything, of making those 30-odd dancers become one."

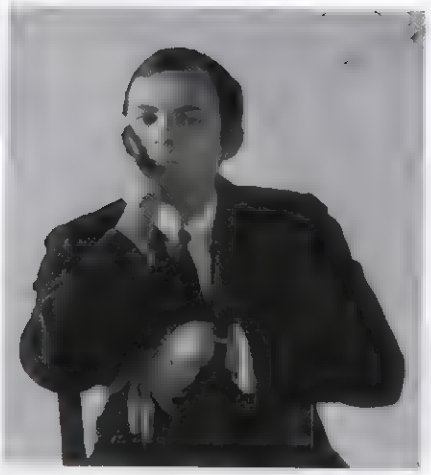
If I'd thought at first that "La Bayadère" was an insanely ambitious statement to make, my mind was changed not only by this rehearsal, but by the discovery of La Granja's Palacio. The scale and grandeur of the interior with its long, straight vista of one state room after another, the classical formality of the Le Nôtre-style gardens, the spectacular fountains and choreographed clusters of tritons and cherubs must stand as the ultimate inspiration to Corella and his company. One of the young dancers agreed. "I still get a shiver when I walk past the palace from my apartment to class. It's the symbol of everything Angel hopes to achieve."

THE TOWN OF La Granja itself is pretty nondescript, heaving with day-trippers in the summer but half-dead for the rest of the year. The company tend to hang out at Rinthin, a tiny restaurant with a daily €10 menu, and Haiku, a lively bar with free internet access. "The whole town is changing for the dancers," claims Corella, who has bought a house nearby. The mayor, he says, is eager to re-establish La Granja as a centre for music and the arts, "like it was in Philip's time". It helps that Madrid is now only half an hour away by Bullet train, direct to the brand-new Segovia station; and there's also the modish Parador—a tourist attraction in itself. You sense that La Granja will soon reflect the vibrant cultural expansion that's happening in Madrid. With Richard Rogers's funky airport terminal, the new Prado extension, and Herzog & de Meuron's miraculous €60m CaixaForum art centre, Madrid now rivals Bilbao as an arena for modern architecture.

Corella has arrived in La Granja, his hair still slicked back from a photoshoot in Madrid for the new Spanish edition of *Vanity Fair*. As he sits in a corner of Haiku enthusing about his company's plans (mid-July's preview performances of a mixed contemporary bill in the gardens of La Granja, the new work he hopes to commission from Christopher Wheeldon and Wayne McGregor), he is almost as animated as when he dances. But at company class the next morning, at what would be 3.15am Chicago time, I witness a display of Corella voltage that could have set the Parador ablaze. With most of the dancers going through the motions with blank expressions, and a couple of the English boys stopping halfway through a manège and staggering off, their director had clearly decided to lead by example. Although he's almost a decade older, Corella's entrechats were higher and neater than anyone else's, and when he leapt he danced, his head thrown back, his face alive. At pirouette time he really let them have it with a gazillion spins, so fast that he blurred liked a skater, sinking down, pulling up, ending with textbook control. I'd never seen anything like it, nor, apparently, had the dancers, who burst into spontaneous laughter and applause. But sensitive to the fact that some of the kids might be feeling inadequate and demoralised, Corella's pep-talk at the end was gentle. "This is the kind of class we want for the company. I understand that it's hard, but don't get frustrated, it's just been one week and a half..."

Ballet de España has until September to form a cohesive company. Susan Jones returns for most of August, and Makarova will come to add the final touches. "La Bayadère" is the company's audition piece—"All the government and everyone is going to be there"—as Corella seeks official permission to become the Royal Ballet of Spain with Teatro Real as its base. Queen Sofia has already pledged her support, but a possible obstacle is the fact that Tamara Rojo, a strikingly intelligent ballerina with powerful connections in Spain, has plans of her own to head a national classical company. This spring she launched a bitter attack on her country's failure to support creativity, its subtext undoubtedly her own frustration at the government's failure to make this happen. Rojo refuses to comment on Ballet de España, but Corella wishes her well. "It's competition that creates a buzz." Spain may, as Rojo insists, have let down its home-born dance talent, but when it comes to establishing the country's first major ballet company it's a case of who dares wins—and Corella has got there first. ■

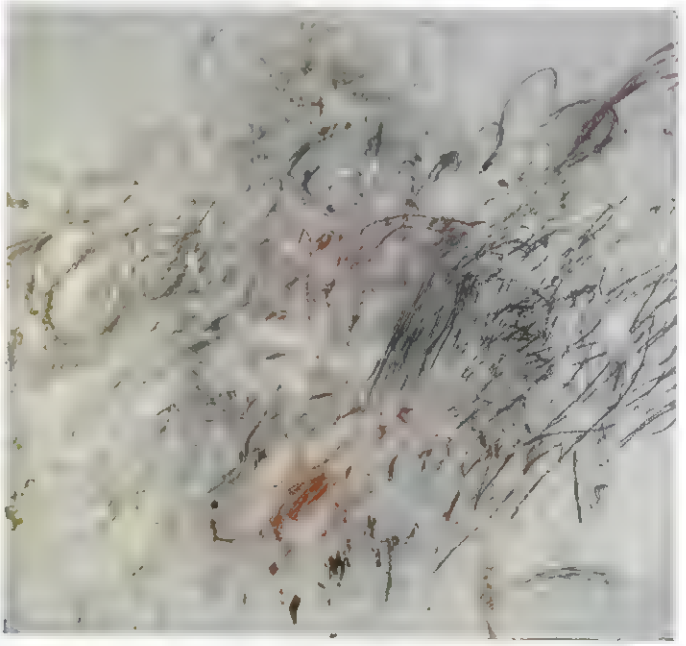
to feel that they're up there dancing themselves"



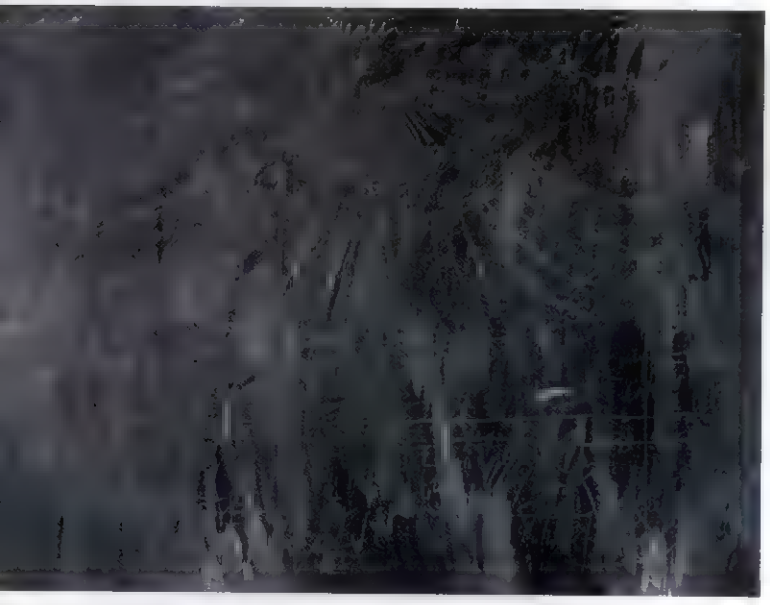
THE VISUAL CV *Cy Twombly*

His 80th birthday is being marked at the Tate and the Prado. PHILIP HENSHER traces the arc of a painter who is both modern and classical

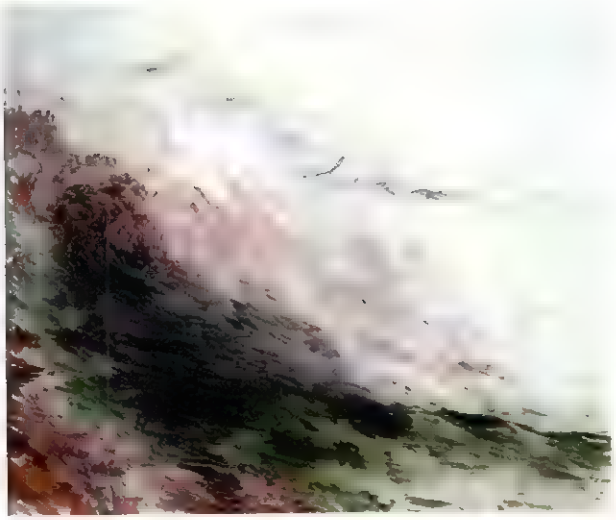
1961 The Italians *(left)*
Cy Twombly was born in Lexington, Virginia, in 1928, the son of a baseball pitcher. From this out-of-the-way spot, events took him to the sources of modernism. In 1951-52 he studied at the Black Mountain College in North Carolina with some of the central modernist refugees from Nazism, and met big figures such as Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell. Twombly moved to Italy in 1959, and ever since he threw his first sculptures into the Tiber as a propitiatory act, he has had an almost magical connection to it, while working at an angle to both the European and American traditions. "The Italians" is a noisy and chaotic evocation of city life. Italians have been drawing penises on walls since as far back as Pompeii, and Twombly's painting calls up both contemporary scribbles and the nameless ancient artists whose rude commentary survives along with the walls of ancient Rome.



1962 Leda and the Swan *(right)*
By the early 1960s Twombly had an international reputation, sealed by a show at the 1964 Venice Biennale. His deep involvement with the grandeur of classical myth could take a surprising turn. "Leda and the Swan" has a hint of the Looney Tunes about it, plunging us into the uproar of the impossible copulation with a thicket of scribbles and flying feathers

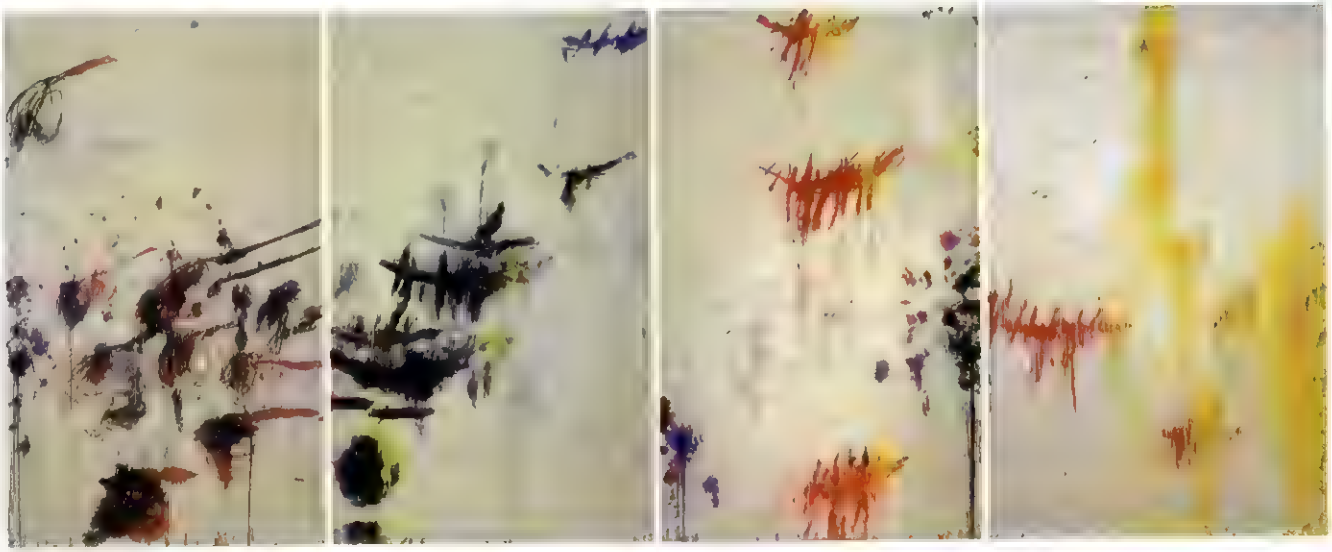


1968 Synopsis of a Battle *(left)*
The image of chalk on a blackboard drew Twombly, as it drew a very different artist, Joseph Beuys. For Beuys, the blackboard was the image of authority and power. For Twombly, it is the moment where knowledge and fantasy meet. His white-on-black paintings have the air of pedagogy let off the leash. They don't convey anything; their meaning and even their mood is not easily readable. What is there is a characteristic pleasure in the recorded gestures of the body, and a love of academic imagery running riot. Twombly's work is the recovered dreams of a history professor, and he starts from the loose, hypnotic blackboard scribbles which are made before thinking is embarked upon, or perhaps after.



1984 Hero and Leander 1 *(above)*
Twombly had worked as an army cryptographer, and some of his paintings are puzzles to be solved. "Hero and Leander 1" is a welter of dark greens, reds and blacks. This great Hokusai wave is a tsunami of passion, not just a natural phenomenon. What the rest of the triptych records might be the period after some great cataclysm. The violence passes, leaving only a dark mutter of paint sinking like treacle, and finally a huge rippling surface. These are not recordings of violence, but meditations on its aftermath and its creative power.

1985 Wilder Shores of Love *(right)*
Writing on paintings is like voice-over in films: violently frowned upon by the purists. It's an important part of Twombly's manner. Here, the pictorial aspect is an abstract allusion to one of the classical forms of landscape painting. The huge scrawled title, though, leads us right up to something cryptic and private, a message sent to a very few people. The more the painter writes, the less we know how to read.



1993-94 The Four Seasons 1-4 *(above)*
The four seasons are one of the key subjects of Western art. They form a satisfying whole, and in the past would have supplied a rich patron with a beautiful and showy cabinet of treasures. A four part work can surround the owner and transform the year into a four sided room. Twombly's "Four Seasons" reduce the conventions to their basics. In "Winter" the treatment is nothing more than a sooty black scrub, tinged with a very dirty-looking yellow. Yellow runs through these seasons like a principle, but each painting handles it in a different way. By "Summer" it has taken charge, and the blaze is that of a Roman summer. In the 1980s and 1990s, Twombly took an increasing interest in flower painting. The lovely bouquet-like structures which frame "Spring" have grace as well as force; the explosions of red and yellow falling down the canvas are expressions of pure spirit, and not representations of reality. There is an unexpected realism to the cycle, most evident in the dankness of "Winter" and the light-obscured fury of "Summer". The triumph of Twombly's career is his ability to take historical subjects from their cabinets and reinvigorate them with new, outdoor life and energy. The cycle of the seasons in nature has no beginning and no end, but Twombly's sequence does something perverse in beginning with autumn. His "Autumn" is a burst of final energy, and not what we usually mean by "autumnal". It reinforces the sense, apparent throughout his career, that he is a painter towards the end of painting's history.

***Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons**, a retrospective at Tate Modern, London, June 19th to September 14th, tate.org.uk. His **Lepanto** is at the Museo del Prado, Madrid, June 24th to September 15th. [illegible]*

How dumb is your bestseller list?

BOOKS

Britain's bestsellers are under fire. But are they any worse than their American counterparts? TOM SHONE curls up with several books from each list to find out

THE THIRD INSTALMENT of autobiography from the former page-three model Katie Price, "Jordan: Pushed to the Limit", sees her through many trials and tribulations–post-natal depression, a miscarriage, a near-miss with Posh Spice. It ends, however, on a jubilant note. "Next year I'm thirty and I'm planning a massive party. I've got more novels coming out, more TV series, more trips to America and more merchandise," she writes. "I should also have had my boobs done again. This time it's going to happen! They need some serious tweaking." So, too, does the British publishing industry, according to some. At a Royal Society of Literature debate in March, Clare Alexander, president of the Association of Authors' Agents, criticised a literary culture in which ghostwritten celebrity books, misery memoirs and Richard & Judy endorsements have "tainted publishers' minds". Contrasting the current British non-fiction bestseller charts with the more high-minded titles on the *New York Times* list, she said, "We have the stupidest bestseller list in the world at the moment."

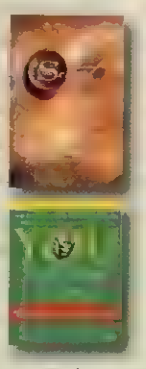
The *New York Times* list does have a notable heft to it, coming freighted with the latest works of Norman Mailer, Michael Chabon, Garrison Keiller, Don De Lillo, Kurt Vonnegut, Nicholson Baker and Oliver Sacks. The German list is full of books about travel and the great outdoors, and even finds a space for Germany's civil code at number nine; while the French devour Gallimard novels by the bucketload. The British bestseller list, by contrast, has recently boasted four books by celebrity chefs (Gordon Ramsay, Delia Smith, Rick Stein, Jamie Oliver), two by "Top Gear" presenters (Richard Hammond, Jeremy Clarkson), and two by people whose final push to the summit of celebrity came from reality TV, Jordan and Russell Brand. Ouch. The only work of non-fiction in the French list is the autobiography of Simone Veil, the Holocaust survivor who became the first female president of the European Parliament; the biggest-selling work of non-fiction in Britain has come from a survivor of "I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here" who recently had her breasts surgically reduced from 32G to 32D.

To be fair, critics have detected a slight darkening in tone in "Jordan: Pushed to the Limit" by comparison with the earlier volumes. The Price clan seem to spend so much time in hospital that they end up recognising the porters; at one point her mother and grandmother find themselves sharing the same breathing apparatus. "Why does this keep happening to us?" she laments before screeching off to the emergency room, one more time, in her new Ferrari. The book is all *OK* magazine photo shoots and ruptured uteruses and nothing in between. The best thing that can be said about it is that, the odd ghostwritten leer aside ("girl on girl action"), it's not written for men. The dominant tone, for all her pinks and feathers and bling and fairy dust, is one of simmering rage, "as if I had a gremlin of anger building up inside of me and at any moment I would explode and tell everyone to fuck off!" She never does, more's the pity, instead dutifully trotting along to a Blackpool gay bar in hot pants and high heels, pregnant, to promote a new album, smothering her objections as she goes. "Who knows," she muses, "maybe one day my image will be on a stamp."

What's behind the Jordan phenomenon? Partly it is the nature of fame these days. At a time when most A-list celebrities have pulled up the shutters and retreated behind their press officers and PR consultants, the public need for celebrity access has outstripped the supply of celebrities willing to give it, thus allowing others to step into the breach: it is precisely because Julia Roberts doesn't do one-on-one interviews any more that Katie

AMERICA'S BESTSELLERS PULP FICTION AND SELF-HELP

1	The Appeal – John Grisham	708,000
2	7th Heaven – James Patterson	329,000
3	Plum Lucky – Janet Evanovich	277,000
4	The Secret – Rhonda Byrne	276,000
5	Duma Key – Stephen King	265,000
6	Rodrick Rules – Jeff Kinney	184,000
7	A Thousand Splendid Suns – Khaled Hosseini	173,000
8	You: Staying Young – Mehmet C. Oz	145,000
9	New Moon – Stephanie Meyer	131,000
10	World Without End – Ken Follett	125,000



BRITAIN'S BESTSELLERS BIG ON CELEBRITIES AND CHEFS

1	A Thousand Splendid Suns – Khaled Hosseini	281000
2	Delia's How to Cheat at Cooking – Delia Smith	229000
3	Jordan: Pushed to the Limit – Katie Price	135,000
4	Jamie at Home – Jamie Oliver	121,000
5	Remember Me – Sophie Kinsella	65,000
6	My Booky Wook – Russell Brand	57,000
7	Lords of the Bow – Conn Iggulden	53,000
8	7th Heaven – James Patterson	53,000
9	Nigella Express – Nigella Lawson	49,000
10	The Appeal – John Grisham	49,000

Figures supplied by Nielsen BookScan and rounded to the nearest thousand. Sales figures are estimates, based on returns from a range of stores, for the first ten weeks of this year

ILLUSTRATIONS BRETT RYDER

Say what you like about someone whose first instinct on seeing her dead grandmother is to whip out her camera-phone, she certainly registers vividly

Price feels the need to come clean about her blood clots.

The other reason seems twinned with the reality shows that gave rise to her, which is to say, it has to do with the weakened power of fictional story lines to hold the public's attention. Say what you like about someone whose first instinct on seeing her dead grandmother is to whip out her camera-phone and take a picture of her in the casket, she certainly registers more vividly than the wan lawyers and downy movie stars who troop through the fiction of John Grisham and Danielle Steele.

You can't fault either of these titans for not trying to keep up with the times. The new Steele novel, "Honour Thyself", is all about a "legend of film and stage" who is holidaying in Paris when she is caught in a terrorist bomb blast; the new Grisham, "The Appeal", is all about an unscrupulous Wall Street millionaire who tries to fend off an ecological lawsuit by buying himself a judge on the Supreme Court (they cost $8m, apparently). Neither book escapes the flatness of the newspaper clippings that inspired them: America may simply be more of a non-fiction kind of place right now. The last few years have seen the non-fiction lists turn into something like the conscience of the nation, with lots of sharp, fierce, anguished books about the war on terror, the Bush presidency, the war in Iraq, the corruption of the judiciary, the erosion of civil liberties and so on. If Delia's "How to Cheat at Cooking" appears to be the level of British self-incrimination, it could be because it is America's turn to feel bad about itself right now.

What of its fabled ability to feel good? There's another, more prosaic reason for the top-heaviness of the American lists; in 1985, the *New York Times* editors grew so weary of titles like "Jane Fonda's Workout Book" dominating their list–it had spent six months at number one, and more than 16 months in the top five–that they sectioned off all the self-improvement titles into a separate list, called "Advice". If you remerge the two lists, to show which books have actually sold the most, things don't look so civic-minded for the Americans. In, with a bullet, come titles like "Stop Whining Start Living", "Does This Clutter Make My Butt Look Fat?" and "How Come That Idiot's Rich and I'm Not?", a common feeling for those perusing these lists.

Sticking the word "you" into titles seems to act as rocket fuel: there's "Become a Better You", not to be confused with "You: Staying Young: The Owner's Manual for Extending Your Warranty", or indeed "Are You Ready! To Take Charge, Lose Weight, Get in Shape and Change Your Life Forever". So does a reassuring feel of bestsellers past. The top non-fiction title on the merged list for the first ten weeks of this year is Rhonda Byrne's >

"The Secret" peddles a brand of spiritual uplift that has long found favour in America: take the road less travelled, but feel free to do so in a new Lexus

> "The Secret", a small book with a "Da Vinci Code"-ish cover and a sonorous blurb. "You hold in your hands a great secret. It has been passed down the ages, highly coveted, hidden, lost, stolen and bought for vast sums of money. This centuries-old secret has been understood by some of the most prominent people in history: Plato, Galileo, Beethoven, Edison, Carnegie, Einstein..." Already you're on guard: how can it be lost if it's so widely known?

There are plenty of quotes from other self-help gurus–motivational speakers, "life adventurers", and self-proclaimed "spiritual messengers"–and lots of pseudo-scientific jargon (magnets, vibrations, wavelengths and the like), but basically it boils down to this: think positively. To those who object that they have been thinking positively ever since Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking" in 1952, you haven't really been trying. Really concentrate: "Look at the back of your hands, right now. Really look at the back of your hands: the colour of your skin, the freckles, the blood vessels, the rings, the fingernails. Take in all those details. Right before you close your eyes, see those hands, your fingers, wrapping around the steering wheel of your brand new car..." The book peddles the same brand of spiritual uplift that has long found favour in America: free yourself from the cares and wants of this world, follow the road less travelled, but feel free to do so in a brand new Lexus. Byrne advises against reading newspapers or watching television (too much of a downer), and urges us, at the end of the day, "if any events or moments did not go the way you wanted, replay them in your mind in a way that thrills you." Thus "The Secret" represents the more feverish and forgetful strain of the American character: it could well turn out to be George Bush's favourite book.

I'm not sure what Bush would make of Khaled Hosseini's "A Thousand Splendid Suns", which completes its global victory tour with a British number one. Admittedly, Hosseini got there with a leg-up from daytime telly in the form of "Richard & Judy", but still: a work of fiction! A work of foreign fiction!

Hosseini's first novel, "The Kite Runner", told of the friendship between two Afghan boys against a backdrop of turbulent war-torn history. The new one, with a cunning switch of focus, tells of the friendship between two Afghan women against a backdrop of turbulent war-torn history. First up is Miriam, a beautiful bastard child disowned by her father and married off to a foul, abusive shopkeeper with sagging breasts called Rasheed. Cut forward a decade, the communists have been routed by the mujahideen, and Laila, the daughter of a bookish family in downtown Kabul, is dreaming of the day her boyfriend will return from the mountains. When a rocket slams into the side of her house, however, she is found in the rubble by none other than Rasheed, now shopping for a second wife. Of all the luck: the one flabby-breasted symbol of male bigotry in the whole of Afghanistan and she falls into his clutches.

The rest of the book is spent waiting for Rasheed to get it in the neck, if only to put an end to this kind of thing: "Meet our real masters: Pakistani and Arab Islamists. The Taliban are puppets. These are the big players and Afghanistan is their playground." It's Hosseini who is the puppet-master here, pulling together over three decades of recent Afghan history, and all too often letting you see the strings: "If she could articulate it, she might have said to Nana that she was tired of being used as an instrument, of being lied to, laid claim to, used." If she could articulate it? There's a strong whiff of authorial condescension here, as if Hosseini were worried that his Western readers wouldn't really get these funny foreign characters, and needed an extra helping of liberal outrage to smooth the way. He lives in California now and "A Thousand Splendid Suns", for all its teeming detail, feels a strangely uprooted piece of work, foreign fiction for those who can't be bothered with a translation. It faces West, not East, to the land of Disney and "Titanic" showing on movie screens while Taliban shells lay waste to Kabul. "Inside Laila, too, a battle was being waged...How could she care about statues when her own life was crumbling to dust?" Big news, I guess: the age of terror has finally found its Herman Wouk.

The *New York Times*'s creation of a ghetto for all their dumbest books seems like a bright idea, and could easily catch on in other countries. The Germans could siphon off all their travel books, the Japanese all their health and beauty titles, and the British could issue a moratorium on all their TV personalities. On the other hand, it's hard to see what would be left. Russell Brand is working on a second "Booky Wook" which is said to focus not on Brand himself but on everything else, including "football, sex and the school rabbit". Come back, Delia–all is forgiven. ■

A different tune

OPERA

What were the Aberfan Wives Group doing on a bus with a baritone? ROBERT BUTLER, who joined them, explains

AS THE COACH pulls through the valley, the women on board screw up their faces, to make them really small, and then stretch them out, to make them really large. A beaming young opera singer stands in the aisle with a microphone, egging them on. "What big mouths you've got!" The women follow his instructions, rubbing their neck muscles, their temples and the sides of their foreheads. It's very helpful, he tells them, for a singer to have a big head to resonate all the sound. "Bryn has got probably the biggest head I've ever seen."

The coach is on its way to Cardiff for a dress rehearsal of Verdi's "Falstaff" with Bryn Terfel. En route, another baritone, Craig Yates, is giving the women the background to Verdi's last opera, singing several arias, and leading them all in the final-act chorus, where the fairies vengefully pinch and prick Falstaff. All this is the first step in Welsh National Opera's (WNO's) three-year programme to reach out to new audiences, or "marginalised communities", in South Wales. Yates has taught "The Magic Flute" to Cardiff schoolchildren who think "opera is for fat people and rich people". But this gig—singing Verdi unaccompanied as the bus swings into a roundabout—is another matter. He's gripping the top of the seats and breaking into a sweat.

Verdi's "Falstaff" is based on Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor". "I know you've all been to Buckingham Palace," Craig says. "So you know all about Windsor." It might be tempting to describe the group as merry wives themselves, if they weren't from Aberfan. Six miles from Merthyr Tydfil, Aberfan is the site of the best-known mining disaster in living memory. On October 21st 1966, a waste tip slid down Merthyr Mountain, destroying the junior school and killing 144 people, including 116 children. Some of the women on the bus lost children that day.

They have been meeting once a week since 1967, for talks by guest speakers, jewellery evenings, chocaholic evenings and quizzes. The idea was not to talk about what had happened, but to concentrate on other things. At one time, the Aberfan Young Wives Club had 60 members and a waiting list; they stopped at 60 because the hall next to the Methodist church couldn't accommodate any more. Today, there are 26 members of the Aberfan Wives Group (the Young was dropped long ago). Last year, to mark their 40th anniversary, they were invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. Invitations are usually limited to a couple of people, but the ITV film of the trip shows them all, in fluttery silk and pastel dresses and sensible, wind-resistant hats. "We were treated like royalty," one Aberfan wife said, while another couldn't help thinking that, lovely as it was, "It came at a price."

The next stage in WNO's three-year project comes in June, with the premiere of "Carbon 12", a choral symphony about coal mining by the Belize-born composer Errollyn Wallen. It combines the orchestra and chorus of the WNO with the Parc and Dare Brass Band, the Risca Male Voice Choir and a women's chorus from Merthyr. Its subject-matter ranges from the creation of coal 300m years ago, with coal swamps buzzing with spiders and flies, through the industrial revolution, the strike of 1926 and the nationalising of the coal industry in 1947, to the events known to everyone on the bus. At one point, a quarter of a million people worked in the Welsh mines; in January 2008, the last deep mine, Tower Colliery, was closed.

The libretto asks if coal was a blessing or a curse. When it considers the curse, an incantatory list of colliery disasters builds to a description of Aberfan:

Hear a noise like a jet plane
See a tree and a telegraph pole racing towards you
Down Merthyr Mountain
A black mass of stuff

One of the wives tells me that the best piece of writing about Aberfan was Laurie Lee's "The Village that Lost its Children" >

NEIL BENNETT

> (reprinted in "I Can't Stay Long", 1975). Some of the moments Lee recorded are echoed in John Binias's libretto. Wallen tells me: "I use gaps, pauses and orchestral stabs, then a relentless quasi-march builds and builds to the recounting of Aberfan. We gradually go to dark silence for the words: 'You could not hear a bird or a child.'"

As the bus nears Cardiff, the bay sparkles in the spring sunshine and the Wales Millennium Centre looms into view with its slate, metal and wood, largely sourced in Wales. The women hurry across the concourse towards the lifts and their seats in the upper circle. As they learnt on the coach, "Falstaff" has no overture—it goes straight into Sir John Falstaff, liar, braggart, coward and glutton, drinking in the Garter Inn and sealing the wax on the identical letters he is sending to two married women.

The lights have gone down by the time the last of the Aberfan wives reaches her seat. For half of them, this is their first trip to the opera. If all goes to plan, this will be just the start of their involvement in the three-year project. The wives are going to join a songwriting workshop. When "Carbon 12" is performed in the Valleys in the summer, it will be part of a double-bill, and the other half will be songs created in the workshops.

This, too, is only a beginning: in the autumn, there will be workshops with groups ranging from a rugby club, to mums and toddlers, to the homeless and substance abusers. These new songs will become the basis for an opera that reflects the journey from the Valleys to the bay—the same journey the bus has just made. The resulting work will be performed by WNO in Cardiff in 2010, along with Wagner's "Die Meistersinger". The lead in that will be played by the man the Aberfan wives are now leaning forward to see in the flesh: the one with the big head. ■

Carbon 12 Millennium Centre, Cardiff, June 6th and 12th; Hippodrome, Birmingham, June 19th; Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre, Ferndale, June 27th; wno.org.uk

THE PLAYLIST

Leonard Cohen

He's back on tour after a 15-year gap. TIM DE LISLE picks his best tunes for your iPod

When Leonard Cohen arrived in New York from Canada to tout his first songs round the agents, he was asked, "Aren't you a little old for this game?" That was in 1966. Within a year, he had made the unheard-of leap from poet and novelist to pop star. Ever since, he has been a cult figure, adored by about a million fans and misunderstood by nearly everyone else. He still gets mocked for his misery, when he hasn't been more than averagely gloomy for 20 years. His songs are warm and soulful, and what they lack in musicality, they make up for in literacy. Cohen is as good a lyricist as Dylan, and his gift hasn't faded with the decades. His voice has long since gone from singing to merely declaiming, so this summer's tour, his first in 15 years, could be just a series of poetry readings. But what poetry. Here are nine Cohen songs no self-respecting iPod should be without.

Suzanne (Songs of Leonard Cohen, 1967)
Cohen announces himself with an educated folk song. Suzanne serves tea and oranges, and Leonard touches her perfect body with his mind—a phrase which almost makes ogling respectable. Jesus puts in an appearance too, the first of many.

Bird on the Wire (Songs from a Room, 1969)
A magical tune about the human condition: "Like a bird on the wire / Like a drunk in a midnight choir / I have tried in my way to be free". Covered by 100 acts, including Cohen's great contemporary Johnny Cash

Chelsea Hotel No 2 (New Skin for the Old Ceremony, 1974)
A stylish kiss-and-tell about a fling with Janis Joplin. "You told me again / You preferred handsome men / But for me you would make an exception." The gentleman in him regretted it, but the showman went on performing it

Hallelujah (Various Positions, 1984)
After a slow start, this erudite threnody has become Cohen's best-loved song. Jeff Buckley made it his signature, Rufus Wainwright did it in "Shrek", and in March it even reached "American Idol"—and the iTunes top ten

Everybody Knows (I'm Your Man, 1988)
A tinkly synthesiser serves up jealousy with style: "Everybody knows you've been discreet / But there were so many people you just had to meet / Without your clothes".

Tower of Song (I'm Your Man, 1988)
A defining moment as Cohen contemplates his own craft: "I said to Hank Williams, how lonely does it get? / Hank Williams hasn't answered yet / But I hear him coughing, all night long / Oh, a hundred floors above me / In the tower of song." In the 2005 film "I'm Your Man", he performed it with U2

Take This Waltz (I'm Your Man, 1988)
Another sparkling lyric, with added melodrama—because it's translated from Lorca. Cohen is such a fan of his, he named his daughter after him.

Democracy (The Future, 1992)
A prophecy of doom set to a cheery march. Cohen foretells the LA riots—and encapsulates America: "the cradle of the best and of the worst".

Alexandra Leaving (Ten New Songs, 2001)
After a long spell as a Buddhist monk, Cohen returned with renewed elegance. This stately ballad, adapted from the poet Cavafy, was one of John Cale's "Desert Island Discs".

Leonard Cohen tours Europe from June 13th to August 3rd. leonardcohentiles.com

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Arms and the bride

In Crete, guns and marriage go together like a horse and carriage, so a wedding is a striking mixture of ancient and modern. PHILIP WATSON joins the party

WE WERE SITTING with my wife's cousins in front of their village house, and tears were already being shed. All should have been well: Antoni and Sofia were getting married in two weeks' time, the engagement had been a happy one, and both families had declared themselves pleased with the match; even the collection of the dowry had been satisfactory. But Sofia was crying, and the source of her unhappiness was a subject close to every Cretan man's heart: guns.

"There it is again!" said Manolis, the head of the family. Sure enough, the toc-toc of small-arms fire echoed across from the dusty gold and green hillside opposite.

"I don't want guns at my wedding," Sofia wailed, "we're not Palestinian militia!"

Ever since the first gun arrived on the island, shots fired in the air have outdone the traditional sound of church bells to herald important social occasions. Weddings, births, celebrations of all kinds continue to be marked by a volley of gunfire, or ***balothies***. The Cretan man powerfully asserts his right to defend himself against thieves, imposters, invaders or, more traditionally, the next-door village. The last time Cretan men were advised to give up their weapons was by their own government, shortly before the German invasion of 1941, and that generation swore never to perform such rash acts of peace again. Today Crete has the highest ratio of guns per head in the European Union—even going by the official figures. The population of Greece is 11.5m, and there are 1m licences for rifles alone; but according to some estimates there are a further 1.5m unlicensed guns. Sometimes it feels as if most of those are in Crete.

Sofia's brothers, Dimitri and Costas, handsome young men in their mid-20s, are proud of their guns, just like any other man in the district. If you mention them, they laugh and wink at each other. They keep their weapons buried in one of the family's tomato fields, Manolis said, although the expression on his face told me he didn't approve.

"You've heard about the tank, haven't you?" Dimitri asked me. His brother smiled. Somewhere on the island, the story goes, is a German Tiger tank from the second world war, kept out of sight and in full working order. True or not, the story illuminates a Cretan characteristic: independence of spirit, and pride in outwitting interfering lawmakers and invading foreigners alike.

Gun licences are granted mostly for hunting, and some insist that the gun laws are tight. Others mention their neighbours' latest purchases: Kalashnikovs, Glocks and Uzis—quick-firing automatic weapons that would finely mince game animals before they reached the pot. The chatter of machinegun fire is a regular sound in the hills and valleys of western Crete, and whenever two or three men are gathered together, you can be sure that guns will be discussed, compared or fired into the air.

The inevitable question is: don't people get hurt or killed by falling bullets? Ten deaths and three dozen injuries from shooting accidents have been recorded by the police on Crete alone in the last ten years. Giorgos Voulgarakis, the public order minister at the time, invited Mikis Theodorakis, a veteran composer and respected opponent of the 1967-74 military dictatorship, to lead an anti-gun campaign. "We Cretans used firearms during hard times in the past to protect our country and our island," Voulgarakis said. "Now, sadly, we effectively turn them against each other." Today, Dimitri, Costas and their friends count on a local policeman to tip them off about the frequent "random" searches for illegal weapons. I asked Dimitri whether anyone was worried about getting caught.

"Of course," he said, "but the police need to file their reports. We'd just have to pay the fines, then life would go on." >

ALAMY

From the other side of the terrace, Manolis clicked his worry beads irritably. "You're forgetting," he said. "What about Zoniana last year?" In the nearby village of Zoniana, a miniature drugs empire is reported to have established itself, with cannabis orchards concealed in the olive groves. In November 2007 a police raiding party was ambushed by at least 20 men armed with Kalashnikovs, injuring three officers, one seriously. The police are deeply concerned about the effect of the drugs trade on Crete, fearing that the island may become a key staging post between Africa and Europe; there are also signs that local production is on the increase. Manolis gestured towards the fields, to make his point clear: "Now they will come and look for drugs, and they will find your guns."

Dimitri and Costas replied together: "But they won't find any drugs! We are honest people following our Cretan traditions. The police know the difference."

A week before the wedding, my wife attended Sofia's dowry party. In the old days, the groom's family would arrive at the house of the bride's family; they would walk around and touch any object or item of furniture that they wanted for the new couple, and the bride's family was bound to add these to her dowry. Sofia said, laughing, "My grandmother had to hide some family treasures that her parents didn't want to give away"—an old chest had to be hauled out to a barn and covered with some sacks until the groom's family had gone. Today, so there can be no mistake, Sofia's family had simply filled a room with the necessary furniture bought from a popular store in town, some still in its plastic packaging: a white leather sofa, a nest of tables, a high-definition TV, boxed. Whereas the dowry used to be put onto a donkey cart and taken to the couple's home, here everything was loaded onto a couple of 4x4s, and driven off with long blasts on the horn.

The next big party was held in the middle of the week before the actual wedding. All the neighbours brought what they could. The local women from the village sat around the broad concrete terrace, peeling, deseeding and chopping vegetables with sharp little knives, and talking all the while. Tomatoes, cucumbers and potatoes filled plastic buckets in front of them. Walnuts and almonds were cracked skilfully from their shells and tossed into china bowls. Sofia's grandmother sat watching them through her black-rimmed glasses, hands knotted over her stick, complaining that there wouldn't be enough to go round.

The men set up trestle tables and wrestled with stacks of plastic chairs. Sofia's mother laid out crisp white tablecloths, and other women brought more from their own trousseaux. Towards mid-afternoon a pair of strong-looking teenage boys erected a horizontal pole on a pair of supports, like a sort of goalpost. Soon after, the first goat arrived. It was wrapped loosely in a plastic sheet, cradled in the arms of Sofia's brother Dimitri, and it left a thin trail behind him of tiny drops of blood. Dimitri soon had the skinned carcass suspended by its hind feet from the pole. Costas brought another, and hung it with graceful ease next to the first. Manolis smiled and pronounced the old saying "meat is needed for a wedding" and the men agreed solemnly. Within an hour or so five more had arrived, and children skipped up to have their pictures taken with the seven suspended beasts.

Is that a good number, I asked Manolis? He shrugged and waved his hand, as though to say, "don't worry about it, we can manage *with or without* these goats." But he thanked the farmers who had brought a goat loudly, clapping them on the shoulder and urging them to help themselves to cheese and honey.

By midnight, about a hundred people had arrived. The >

Whereas the dowry used to be put onto a **donkey cart** and taken to the couple's home, here everything was loaded onto a couple of 4x4s

TOP Guns are as much a part of everyday life as cars
OPPOSITE Family photographs from "the old days", an endlessly repeated phrase
ABOVE A widow has been crocheting for 15 years for her granddaughter's trousseau

PATRICK FENN

CAPE OTWAY LIGHTSTATION

DAUGHTIES LIGHTHOUSE

OUT THERE

To the lighthouse

It's the ultimate room with a view. REBECCA WILLIS scans the horizon

IT'S HARD TO imagine a more potent symbol of man's eternal struggle against the elements than the solitary white finger of a lighthouse pointing up to the sky. Today many of them have a more prosaic existence as holiday rentals: as the lights themselves became automated, the redundant keepers' dwellings were an obvious tourist opportunity.

By definition most lighthouses are in exposed coastal spots with wraparound views of sea and sky, and for anyone who loves weather (and there are a lot of us out there) it is a thrilling drama to watch the fronts approaching from miles off in the salty air. And as well as being poignant reminders of the rigours of our seafaring past, lighthouses can provide a great perspective in a spiritual as well as a literal sense.

The type of accommodation on offer varies from hotel to hostel, from self-catering to bed and breakfast, and is often in the adjacent cottages rather than the tower itself (so choose carefully if your fantasy is based on readings of Rapunzel). Some lighthouses are more remote than others, some are unsuitable for children and (inevitably) acrophobics, and some have more attention paid to their interiors—though not in a hip hotels sort of way—while others are appropriately spartan. None of them will break the bank. Here is a whirlwind, worldwide tour of a handful of them.

Cape Otway Lightstation, Australia, has been in continuous use since 1848. The towering cliffs on which it sits were, for many immigrants, the first sight of land since leaving Europe. The Great Ocean Road, which runs along the coast here, is one of the world's great drives. Cape Otway is two-and-a-half hours' drive from Melbourne, and you can rent either the Head Lightkeeper's House or the newly renovated Manager's House; some B&B is also available
www.lightstation.com

The East Brother Light Station, California, was due to be torn down after the lighthouses in San Francisco Bay were automated in the 1960s, but local residents saved and restored it. Guests arrive by boat at the one-acre island, where five rooms are available for B&B stays from Thursdays to Sundays. The light tower is part of the Victorian-style house, and proposals of marriage have been made in the lens room
www.ebls.org

The archetypal lighthouse experience—where you stay in round rooms in the tower itself—is available at **Burnham High Lighthouse** in Somerset, England. This 33-metre (110ft) red and white tower overlooks the Bristol Channel and was the first fully automated lighthouse

EAST BROTHER LIGHT STATION

in England. Each room—including the three en-suite bedrooms—is on its own floor, there are 120 steps to the kitchen at the top, then a steep ladder to the lantern room, where you can eat and gaze at the view.
www.lighthouseholiday.com

Saugerties Lighthouse in New York state is 150km north of Manhattan on the Hudson River, surrounded by wetlands. It's a square Victorian brick house with a light on the roof, which today is solar-powered, and it survives thanks to a rescue mission which included reconstructing the massive stone base. Guests can arrive by boat but most approach along a half-mile trail, parts of which may be submerged at high tide There is a small museum and shop, and two double rooms on the second floor offering B&B from Wednesdays to Sundays.
www.saugertieslighthouse.com

Wicklow Head Lighthouse is one of four lighthouses owned by the Irish Landmark Trust and the only one in which you stay in the tower itself. An hour south of Dublin, it was built in 1781 and gutted by fire when struck by lightning in the 1830s. Inside the metre-thick walls with their 27 arched windows, the trust has created six octagonal rooms, for up to six people
www.irishlandmark.com

Veli Rat Lighthouse is one of 11 lighthouses on Croatia's beautiful Adriatic coast which between them offer 20 apartments for rent. Built in the mid-19th century, it sits on a little-populated island reached by a 75-minute ferry journey from the town of Zadar, where you can buy provisions. The two apartments are very simple and the keeper and his family take care of the guests. Surrounded by pine trees and bays with pebble beaches, it is a total escape from the modern world
www.plovput.hr

The Punta Delgada Lighthouse, in a remote corner of Patagonia, has guided ships around the sandbars of the South Atlantic since 1905. It also used to be the casino of the Argentine navy. Today it is a 27-room hotel complex, complete with restaurant and pub, offering not the solitary experience of some other lighthouses but a chance to explore the natural wilderness around it. The beach below has a colony of elephant seals, you can trek or ride along the windswept cliffs, visit a colony of Magellan penguins and go whale-watching.
www.puntadelgada.com

Closer to home, but also with a feeling of being at the end of the earth, are the keeper's cottages at **Cantick Head Lighthouse** on the Orkney island of Hoy. On the tip of the Walls peninsula, the lighthouse overlooks Cantick Sound and the southern entrance to Scapa Flow, and visitors can walk, cycle, go fishing, keep a weather eye out for whales, porpoises and seals, and savour the exposure to big, uninterrupted nature.
www.orkneylighthouse.com

MORE LIGHTHOUSES

Perhaps Britain's best-known lighthouse rentals are on Lundy Island and belong to the Landmark Trust (www.landmarktrust.org.uk).

Rural Retreats offers 30 keeper's cottages for rent around the coast of Britain—some provide earplugs because the foghorn sounds automatically in misty weather (www.ruralretreats.co.uk).

The book "Staying in a Lighthouse" by John Grant (Insiders' Guide, $11.95) is a comprehensive guide to more than two dozen lighthouses at which you can stay in the United States, including several on the Great Lakes.

And if you really get the bug, the website www.lighthouse.cc attempts to list all the lighthouses in the world where you can spend the night

WICKLOW HEAD LIGHTHOUSE

LONELY PLANET SAUGERTIES LIGHTHOUSE; GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY; WICKLOW HEAD; DOUG HOUGHTON

LIVING THERE

Beijing

Throughout its history, China has constructed walls. And it is still at it. JAMES MILES on living in a city where exclusion is in the architecture

BEIJING, MY HOME and workplace for more than half of my adult life, is not a city that embraces its residents. It is designed to exclude. Its architecture is intended to awe. Its layout, intentionally or not, reduces the human being to an ant-like scale in a giant matrix of boulevards and expressways.

Many of the more human parts of the city, the warren of alleyways flanked by grey-walled courtyard houses from pre-Communist days, have been razed. The remnants are still beguiling. Around Qianhai and Houhai lakes there is still a flavour of the old Beijing. Old men take their pet birds for walks, swinging them gently in their cages. In winter, the elderly swim in the freezing lakes to fortify themselves.

But the new Beijing is creeping in. Bars and restaurants are springing up along the water's edge. Bicycle rickshaws carry tourists through the winding alleys, the hutongs as they are known, which are becoming more of a theme park than the oasis of calm they once were. It is easy to feel nostalgic in this part of the city. But walking past the courtyard houses with their thick grey walls and their imposing wooden doors (quaintly scuffed and scarred by the passage of time) the visitor feels shut out even here in the "real" Beijing. There is another world behind the walls, inside the tranquil courtyards, that can only be imagined.

The colossal walls of the ancient Forbidden City, the vastness of Tiananmen Square, and the uncrossable breadth of Chang'an Boulevard form a seamlessly forbidding unity with the architectural wonders that Beijing's urban planners are imposing on the city to impress visitors to August's Olympic games. There is the monster "egg" (as locals call it) that is the city's new opera house; the lurching twisted angular tower of state television's new headquarters, and an airport terminal building on a scale that even China's emperors would have found a little intimidating.

Many expatriates live well outside the city, across the treacly Wenyu River which a few miles downstream feeds into the ancient Grand Canal. Very few people, Chinese or foreigners, are aware that the river connects with this engineering marvel. Oddly it is China's defining symbol of exclusion, the Great Wall (hardly more than a vanity project that did little to keep out barbarians), that is the country's most celebrated engineering feat of pre-modern times. In recent years, a vast mural of the wall, meandering over precipitous mountains, has greeted international visitors as they arrive at the airport and join the immigration queue marked "Foreigners".

The foreigners formed their isolated gated communities out in the middle of dusty farmland because land was cheap (local governments seized it from peasants with a pittance for compensation) and houses could be built rapidly on it thanks to a bureaucracy that cared little for niceties such as planning permission.

Again there is a symmetry here with the old Beijing. Walk along Dongjiaominxiang (once called Legation Street), the now hauntingly quiet main road of what in pre-Communist days was the city's foreign quarter. It was then a city within a city, and a scene of terror in 1900 when fanatical Boxer rebels laid siege to the

area. Its pompous and utterly incongruous Western-style buildings find their modern counterparts out in the foreigners' ghettos near the airport with their otherworldly names such as Yosemite, Chateau Regalia and Merlin Champagne Town.

The walled compound where I live with my family was among the first to be built in the Western style as China's booming economy began to suck in fortune-seeking foreigners in the late 1990s. The city is now developing fast around it: new residential tower blocks, a light-rail link to the airport and a profusion of restaurants. Even in these nondescript suburbs–just as everywhere in Beijing today–some of the world's best cuisine is no more than a couple of minutes' walk away. China's capital is omnivorous–everything from fiery Sichuan dishes to Korean barbecue and Mongolian hotpot can be found on any street. Restaurants are no longer a luxury for Beijing's citizens as they were 20 years ago. They have become a ubiquitous necessity.

If Beijing does not draw the outsider in (the greyness of its smog-laden skies does nothing to enhance its seductive powers), it at least provides an easy exit. The same determination and disregard for cost that produced the Great Wall and the Grand Canal have created a network of expressways rivalling that of America's interstate highways. And beyond the city proper, the roads of the rural hinterland of Beijing municipality (which covers an area bigger than Connecticut) lead motorists high into mountain passes and along village roads that are lined with peasant-run restaurants and guest houses.

It is surprising in a country of breakneck change, where construction rarely takes heed of aesthetic effect, human comfort or the environment, to find stretches of Beijing's countryside where time has stood still. Visitors to the Olympics will get little sense of this as they are bussed out to the Great Wall that snakes over the Yanshan Mountains north of the city. These officially designated tourist sections of the wall have been restored, depriving them of the charm of dignified decay. Whatever remaining appeal they have is offset by crowds and commercialisation. China is becoming more sensitive about visitors trampling on unrestored parts of the crumbling Great Wall. But their beauty is mesmerising even if it is technically illegal to walk on them.

Walls make Beijing forbidding (try walking around the vermilion walls of the Communist Party headquarters in Zhongnanhai to get a feel for what exclusion means). But they are also part of its allure. A few decades ago the city itself and many of the towns and villages around it were surrounded by high thick walls. Only a few still remain. Some of the best-preserved ones are deep in the Beijing countryside around what were once garrisons for troops guarding the Great Wall itself.

The village of Yulin on Beijing's northern border, once a staging post for horses carrying the imperial mail, still has bits of its old walls standing. But the outer cladding of bricks has long since disappeared. What is left is not quite enough to cash in on the tourism boom it had hoped for as China's fast-expanding middle classes take to the roads in their new cars. It takes walls like those of Jimingyi, another imperial postal town farther along the expressway in Hebei province north-west of Beijing, to bring in the visitors. But even picturesque Jimingyi struggles. Expressway tolls are expensive and Beijing's new car owners, still nervous of long-distance driving, prefer to keep closer to home.

Beijing misses its walls. Hosting the Olympics has spurred the city government to try to rebuild part of the old fortifications, which were destroyed in the 1960s to build a ring road. A semi-restored section in the south-east near Dongbianmen has >

Exclusion zones:

OPPOSITE AND BELOW RIGHT Walls in the Forbidden City
BELOW LEFT The Great Wall
CENTRE The thick grey wall of an old courtyard house

> been turned from a slum quarter, with shanties built up against (and built using bricks from) the wall's remains, into a pleasant park.

The Olympics are likely to revive the city's compartmentalised traditions and officialdom's ancient suspicion of outsiders. The Olympic village will be the new Forbidden City, strictly off limits to ordinary mortals. Security will be intense to keep protesters at bay. Foreigners will be kept under close observation to ensure they do not spread subversive ideas (none of the proselytising by Christian groups on the margins of the games that has been a tradition at previous such events). Some visitors will groan at the restrictions, but residents will not be surprised. Such has been the city's nature for centuries. It will take more than the Olympics to change Beijing. ■

China tea and other refreshments:

TOP A typical Beijing hutong (alleyway) ends at a bar
ABOVE LEFT Eating out is popular, literally so by the lakes in the north of the city
ABOVE RIGHT A side order of traditional music
ABOVE Winter swimming, here in the half-frozen Houhai Lake, is considered health-giving

GOING *Native*

EAT Walls box people in at home as well. Architects design poky little kitchens for Beijing homes, but that is because many Chinese eat out very frequently. Strike up conversation with a stranger and the talk often turns to food—which province uses which type of chilli, how the climate has shaped that provincial cuisine. Beijing offers a smorgasbord of specialist restaurants, many exquisitely decorated. Only the swankiest are hushed and elegant, and you want to avoid those. Stay away from the private VIP rooms too—more walls—and eat in the noisy public dining rooms. The Chinese treat their restaurants like pubs, so they are full of conversation and laughter. Traditionally, noodles are energetically slurped, and bones chewed and abandoned on the tabletop. You will know you are in the right place if you hang your jacket on the back of your chair and the waitress protects it from hot oil splashes with a special fabric cover. If you make the mistake of putting your bag down on the floor, she will rescue it and insist you put it on a chair. Take a look at the floor and you may understand why. Try these, and drink beer with everything.

Donglaishun: a chain serving Mongolian hot-pot, Beijing's winter speciality. Diners dip wafer-thin slices of lamb and cabbage into boiling broth. *5th floor, Xindongan Guangchang, Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng district, and many other locations. Tel: 6528 0932 (all numbers local; if calling from abroad, put +86 10 in front)*

Yuxiang Renjia: Sichuan is China's spiciest food, and this is one of Beijing's busiest chains of Sichuan restaurants. Try "water-boiled fish" (expect a gasping fish to be brought to your table for approval first), which arrives with a thick layer of chillis. *2/F Lido Hotel, 6 Jiangtai Road, Chaoyang District (and other locations). Tel: 6437 6688 ext 1558*

Han Na Shan: There is a large Korean population in Beijing, and barbecues throughout the city. In smart restaurants the waitress does the barbecuing for you at your table. My children prefer the restaurants where you do it yourself. Both options are available here. *11 Chunxiu Lu, Dongcheng District (and many other locations). Tel: 6417 8377*

Dintaifung: A Taiwan chain specialising in the Shanghai dumplings called *xiaolongbao*. Another favourite with the children. Eat with care, because boiling soup explodes all over your shirt as you bite into them. *No 24 Xinyuanxili Zhongjie, Dongzhimen, Chaoyang District (and many other locations, see www.dintaifung.com.cn)*

SHOP For the past few years the world's retailers have been trying to sear their brand names into the hearts and minds of urban Chinese. Designer brands fill shiny new malls. But often Chinese first encounter designer brands in the many markets which sell knock-off clothes at knock-down prices. These all started out as street markets but the authorities have now built...you guessed it...walls around them.

Yaxiu Market at 58 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District, for shoes, bags, hats, silk, tailors, electrical goods, underwear, children's clothing, you name it.

Hongqiao Market next to the Temple of Heaven at Tiantan Gongyuan Donglu, Chongwen District for all the above, plus toys and real fresh-water pearls.

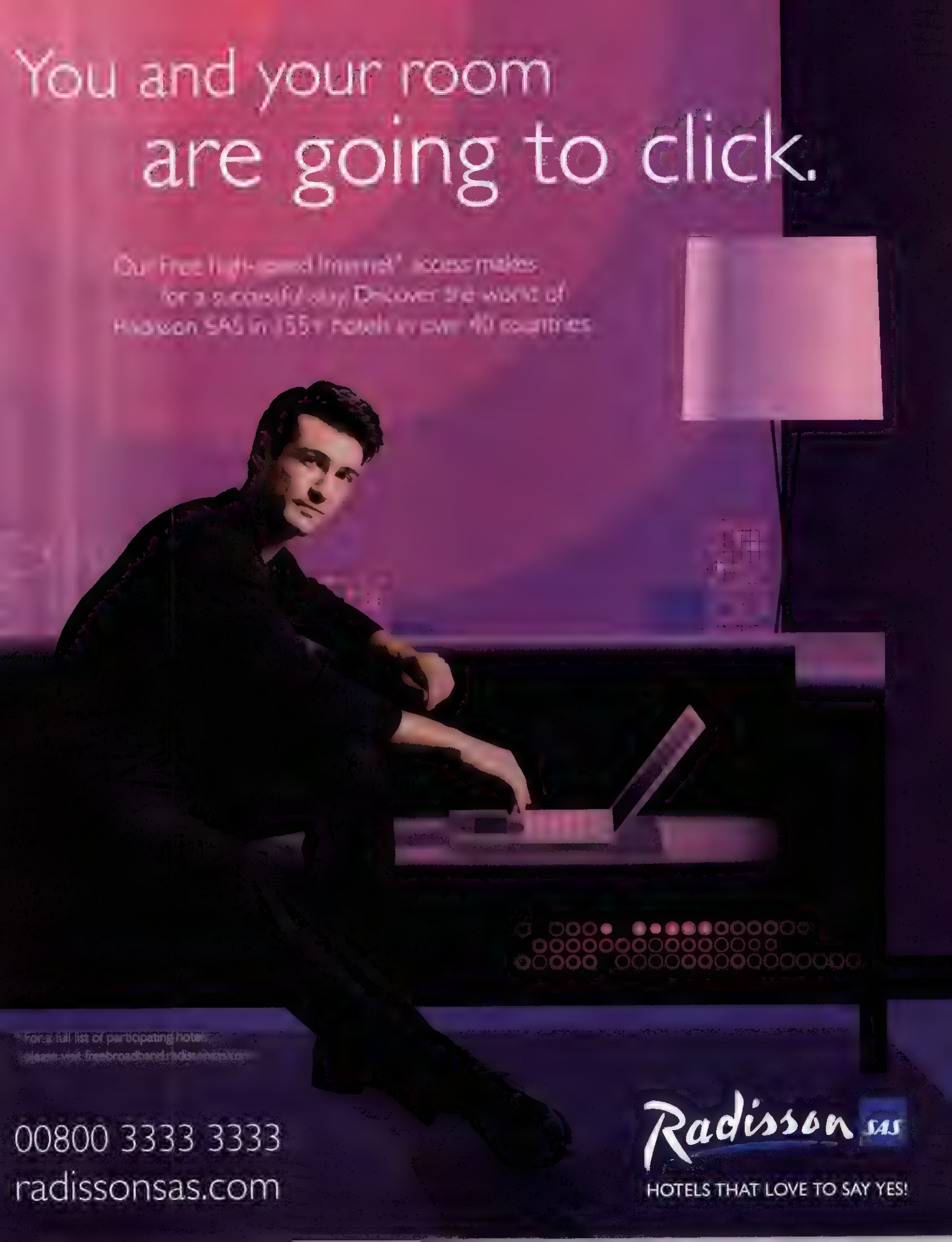
For knock-off antiques and genuine crafts, go to **Panjiayuan Market**, 200 Panjia Lu, Chaoyang District, on a Saturday or Sunday morning. For more authenticity (this is where Chinese collectors hang out) go to the market at **Baoguo Temple**, Guanganmennei, Xuanwu District, on a Thursday morning.

For therapy after the crowds and haggling, go to **Spin** for affordable contemporary ceramics. *6 Fangyuan Xilu, Lido area, Chaoyang District. Tel: 6437 8649*

ESCAPE Beijing is a great place to get out of. Drive out of the city on one of several pay-as-you-go expressways and find yourself rapidly in the mountains, with the **Great Wall** winding its way across precipitous heights. A day out in the countryside used to mean a picnic, but the rural population is busy making money out of city tourists. They are setting up roadside restaurants, often with outside seating areas and great views. They rent out rooms, too, so you can make a weekend of it. Avoid Badaling, where tour groups are commonly taken, and head for Simatai, Huanghuacheng or Mutianyu.

To get a feel for the "wild wall", as unrestored sections of the Great Wall are called, contact **William Lindesay**, who offers weekend hikes and accommodation at his farmhouse. He knows more about the wall than just about anyone and is passionate about its conservation. *www.wildwall.com or e-mail william@wildwall.com* ~ JM

EYEVINE PHOTOGRAPHERS CORBIS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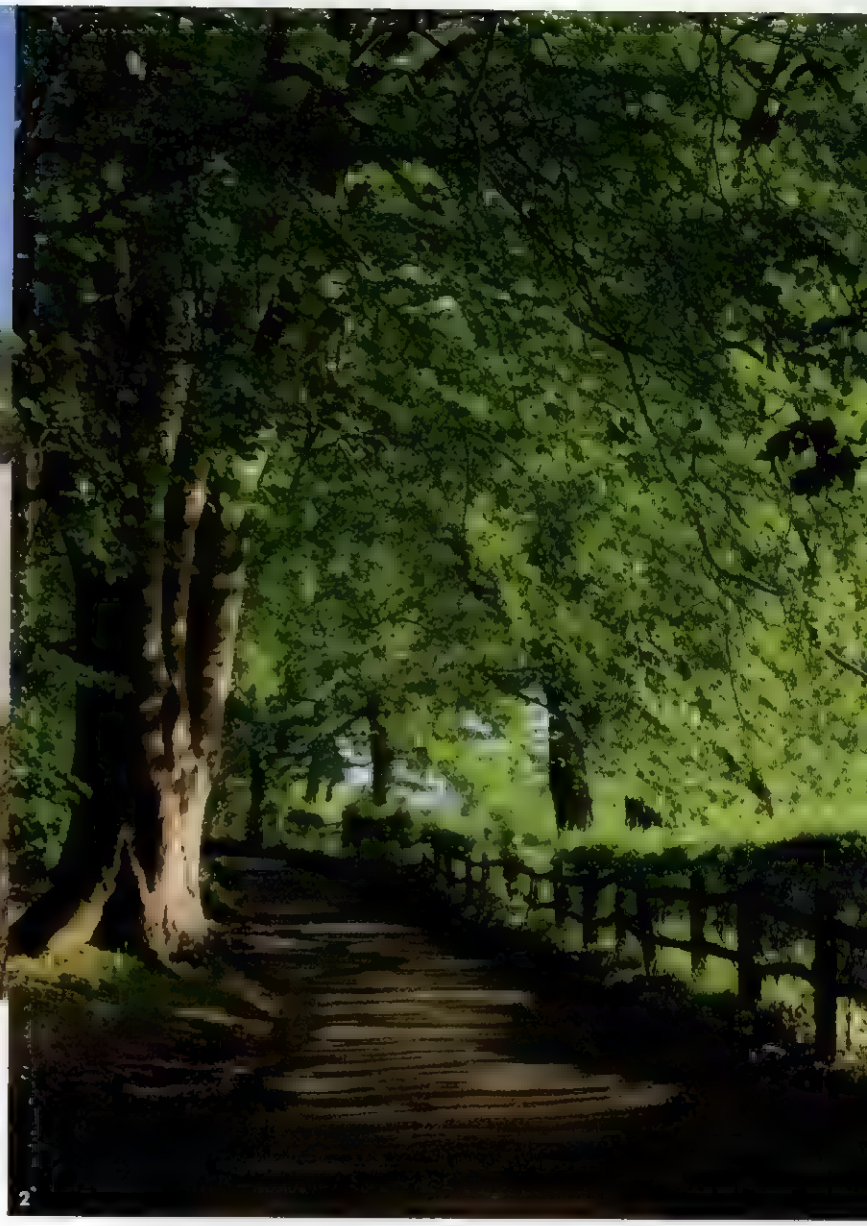

WONDERS

Belinda Earl

As chief executive of Jaeger, Belinda Earl is credited with bringing an ageing brand into the 21st century. She tells REBECCA WILLIS about the seven wonders of her world, from Devon to Nevis via Barcelona

1 BEACH **Yarmer Beach, Devon**
The only access to Yarmer beach is on foot—you walk for ten minutes either around the cliff or on a footpath that crosses the golf course (you have to keep your eyes and ears open, but I've never been hit). The beach is a combination of sand, shingle and rock pools. It's very unspoilt and great for exploring and rock-pooling at low tide and cold swims when the tide is high. It is wonderful in all seasons. I went as a child and we take our children there now.

2 JOURNEY **Driving home**
I have lots of favourite journeys and they nearly all involve going home. Best is driving home on a sunny day. I live in Surrey and the last bit of my journey is on country lanes. Usually I travel by train, so when I drive I enjoy it.

3 BUILDING **La Sagrada Familia, Barcelona**
I love this and all of Gaudí's buildings; they have such character and I admire his creativity. It is so much more than just a structure, it is building verging on art. I remember climbing all the way up it when I was expecting my second child.

6 7

4 VIEW **The sea**

I can't pinpoint exactly where, but my view would be of the sea. It could be in the Caribbean or in England; the sea could be rough or calm as a millpond, but seeing the sea is important to me. I grew up not far from the beach in Devon, and my ideal holiday is by the sea. If pushed, I'd probably go for mighty, rolling surf breaking on a rock with the wind lifting the spray.

5 HOTEL **Nisbet Plantation, Nevis, West Indies**

We found this hotel when we were island-hopping in the Caribbean, and we've been 20 or so times, usually at Easter. The main hotel building is an old plantation house that was the home of Fanny Nisbet, who was married to Horatio Nelson. It is set back from the sea with an avenue of palm trees leading up to it, and you stay in cottages in the grounds; it's relaxed and fun, not glitzy. The staff are all local, so it feels Caribbean, unlike some hotels. The pool is near the beach, so you have both options, and there's always a breeze, so it's never too hot. There are no TVs in the rooms and no kids' club, but the children love it and have great freedom: they play cricket and walk on the beach and collect shells, and they like the fact that it's familiar. It's an escape, a great place to recharge.

6 CITY **London**

I always wanted to work in London, and I've spent all of my career at the heart of it. I love the innovation and the eclectic mix of buildings, sights, history and shops. I never get tired of it. Even after 25 years of living in and around London I still feel very much a visitor. I've always loved shopping, even before I worked in retail, and I think London today competes well with other major cities. It has its own style, there's still innovation and new designers. It's resisting globalisation very well: there's a great cross-section from big stores to little boutiques, a mix of old and new.

7 WORK OF ART **Picture by my son**

This picture by my son, Ben, which he did in an artistic moment when he was six, is of a tiger or a cat, something feline, with stripes on it. We had it framed and it hangs in our hall and I see it every day. It is as valid and worthy as other pieces of art you might acquire, partly for sentimental reasons but also because of the work itself: it's amazing what a child can produce.

JOHN CARTER ALAMY NISBET PLANTATION

SNAPSHOT

Coney Island, New York

There is a seamy romance to Coney Island. This beach at the edge of Brooklyn was hailed as the "playground of the world" for its many acres of cheap thrills in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. What's left is the poignant residue of past dreams—a creaking, 150-foot-high Ferris wheel; a rickety, 80-year-old rollercoaster (the beloved Cyclone) and some beautifully derelict businesses. New Yorkers come by subway for a long day at the beach—to stroll the boardwalk, ride stomach-turning attractions, swim the rough water and buy hot dogs and candyfloss. Hand-painted signs advertise sideshows of fire-eaters, but most people come to bask on the warm sand, so far from the clutter of Manhattan. There is talk of a big redevelopment plan, which could render most of Coney Island unrecognisable. But a sense of doom only enhances the nostalgic feel of the place. ~ EMILY BOBROW

VINCENT AFORET, POLARIS/EYEVINE

The Mission

WILL SMITH learns something new.
NO 4: CIRCUS SKILLS

DAVID YEO

I have found the silver bullet that will stop the trade in illegal drugs.

Where? Twenty feet up in the air, hanging from two canvas straps in a big top in Amsterdam.

In a city renowned for drugs, the one I'm getting off on is adrenalin. This is the biggest high I've ever experienced–and I've performed in front of 6,000 people and shaken Stephen Fry's hand. Admittedly my experience of drugs doesn't stretch beyond Irish coffee, but I'm sure heroin wouldn't make you feel as good as this. Rehab should start with circus lessons.

Rewind to London in February, when I go to see Cirque du Soleil's latest show, "Varekai"–a blend of heart-stopping circus acrobatics and huge-scale theatrical stagings–to choose which act I might like to attempt. My initial reaction? None of them. Not if I value my limbs, and the ability to use them. Maybe I could learn a bit of stilt work instead, or do a little jump through a trapdoor? No, I was told. According to Cirque's publicist, two far more exciting acts–known as Aerial Straps and Icarian Games–are "easy to teach".

By that way of thinking, I could probably pick up piloting Harrier jumpjets in an afternoon.

Aerial Straps is performed by two former British gymnastic champions, Andrew and Kevin Atherton. During the show, they hang on to straps attached to a motorised wire, which then "flies" and spins them 40 feet above the heads of an audience that has its collective jaw on the floor. But here in Amsterdam, they're floor-bound. And, far from being the muscle-rippling adrenalin-junkies I'd expected, they make a charming, self-effacing pair of teachers. They show me how to wrap my hands in two canvas loops–the eponymous aerial straps–and then tell me, when I'm ready, to say "up".

I'm not great with heights, but what I'm even worse at is admitting defeat. So I say a trepidatious "up", the technician presses his buttons, and at a fair speed I am swung up and over the empty auditorium. There's no net beneath me, just a hard stage–the only soft thing I could land on would be the photographer and his assistant. I'm flung through the air in, if such a thing is possible, a controlled way. It's utterly elating. Afterwards, my potential human crashmats tell me they have never seen anyone's face light up with quite so much joy.

Next, I lie crosswise across Andrew in the centre of the stage, with one arm around him; with our free hands we each hold a separate loop. Then we begin to push with our legs, turning ourselves round at a shallow angle to the floor. As we gather speed we're raised up in the air, spinning as we go. Andrew urges me to keep my legs at a 180° angle. For some reason my body decides it would be better to do some flailing scissor-kicks. Not even the comic effect this has on those below dissipates my high.

Next comes the Icarian Games, an act that takes place closer to floor-level, but is no less daunting. It is performed by two Italian brothers, Stiv and Roni Bello. Roni's job is to lie on his back on a chair with his feet in the air, supporting Stiv, who he kicks upwards into a series of aerial somersaults. The brothers say that they want me to jump up and sit on Roni's feet, then lean backwards, arms outstretched, and backflip into a standing position. They have been doing this for about 20 years, and are seventh-generation circus performers. In my life I have done one unassisted forward roll. On the ground. And it hurt.

Luckily, the photographer's assistant suggests that I wear a harness. I may well owe her my life. For my first attempt I have a belt round my waist attached to a rope and pulley, the other end of which is in the strong hands of Roni's and Stiv's father, Luciano. Even then I flail about like...well, like a man trying to balance himself on another man's feet without any prior training. My arms windmill, my legs kick, but thanks to Luciano supporting the bulk of my weight I somehow somersault backwards into a standing position on the floor. Without him I would have made a premature, entirely head-based landing.

My second attempt yields the sort of improvement that gets England football managers sacked. Then it's my turn to lie on the chair, while Stiv sits on my feet. I'm not entirely sure where they are supposed to go: there are sensitive areas to the fore and aft of where Stiv is sitting. This is beginning to make me nervous. But then, for the finale, he makes an upward leap–and all of a sudden I have a man standing on my upturned feet! Another previously unknown joy. I don't know what they charge to teach this by the hour, but I am prepared to steal to fund my new habit. ■

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